

Pretend Mom Book Reviews

Dixie Kincaid is home for the first time in too many years. 7 years ago she left the small Texas town she grew up in to move to New York to try her hand at a singing career. Now she is home on vacation, to see her mom and brothers for the first time since her father's funeral 3 years earlier. Much to her surprise Mike comes to the airport to pick her up.

Mike Dalton is the brother of the guy that Dixie had a crush on as a teenager. She was warned to stay away from Kevin back then, although she had no idea why. Mike is now a permanent fixture in her mother's household, he helps out there every time he is needed. Dixie keeps running into him everywhere she goes. Just what is going on with him, and why did he tell her to not set her cap for his brother all those years ago?

Rita Hestand is by far an amazing writer. Having read several of her books lately, when I was given the chance to read Pretend Mom I jumped at it. Her stories are full of fun, love and hope for the future. I was captivated while reading Pretend Mom. Dixie and Mike will have you laughing and wanting to scream at them both from one minute to the next. Anyone that has loved someone for years and struggled with that love will know where Dixie and Mike are coming from. I hope you enjoy reading about a Pretend Mom as much as I did.

Dixie Kincaid has a fear of flying. Her sister Audrey had died in a plane crash while coming to visit Dixie in New York. When her step-mother Emily calls, asking her to come home to Texas, fearful that something is wrong, Dixie swallows her fears and boards a plane to return home to Texas. Mike Dalton meets Dixie at the airport. He spends a lot of time with her family and has been asked to pick Dixie up. She's stunned by the kiss he gives her and her reaction to it. He's aware that Dixie had a childhood crush on his brother Kevin, so while giving her all the family news he is sure to inform her that Kevin is happy and running for Senator. Dixie thinks that Mike tells her about Kevin's running for Senator because of her career as a rock star; Kevin wouldn't need any publicity because of her. The kiss at the airport and the way Mike keeps looking at her is affecting her though; Dixie's finding herself more and more curious about Mike and his life.

After visiting with her family, Dixie pays a visit to the cemetery to visit her family's graves. She spends a lot of time talking to the markers, crying, and wishing for her sister. Releasing the tension and allowing herself to cry helps to unburden her soul and she leaves feeling better. Even though it is raining, after leaving the cemetery, Dixie decides to visit her special childhood place, an old oak tree that had always somehow given her a sense of comfort. After thinking, she decides that she has to see Kevin to be sure that what she felt for him was really no more than a childhood infatuation before being able to decide whether or not to accept the proposal from her agent. When it starts raining even harder, accompanied by thunder and lightening, Dixie decides to head home, which means she has to cross a ravine which is quickly filling with water. Trying not to panic,

she is working her way across through the water when her foot lodges between a rock and an old tree root. Afraid that she is going to die, she begins talking to herself and comes to the conclusion that maybe she deserves to die. Out of nowhere she hears Mike telling her that she's not dead yet, and suddenly he's in the water with her helping her get lose. Once Mike gets her free, Dixie blacks out while he gets her back home. She wakes up in her own bed with a little child resembling a pixie sitting at the foot of her bed. Who is this child? Where has she come from? And how is she going to impact Dixie's life?

Pretend Mom is a heart-touching feel-good story about a young woman who thought she had it all when she obtained her goal of becoming a rock star, only to find she's lonely. After returning home to Texas, she discovers that the incident that had sent her running to New York and her big music career wasn't such a big deal after all. Having a career as a rock star suddenly isn't enough for Dixie, she wants to be Mike's wife and his daughter's real mom. Rita Hestand writes beautiful, endearing, thought-provoking tales that you'll want to read many times over! Pretend Mom by Rita Hestand

Rating: 5 Stars
Reviewer: Chrissy

Dixie Rose Kincaid made it big in New York City as a singing sensation. But her personal life fizzled to nothingness. So she went back home to a small town in Texas -- where she thought she'd left her heart. Her family needed her and she needed to see Kevin one last time, to rid herself of a childhood crush.

Dixie collides with Mike Dalton, her childhood adversary -- who just happens to be Kevin's brother. The sexy rancher has other plans for Dixie's love life -- that most certainly don't include Kevin.

Determined to get back to New York to resume her career, things get more complicated when Dixie finds she's completely taken with Mike's adorable daughter, Amanda -- who wants Dixie to play Pretend Mom. Torn between what her heart tells her is right and her desire to pursue her thriving singing career, Dixie is faced with the most difficult decision of her life: Can she leave her heart at home -- again?

Rita Hestand packs as much into this 90 page story as you might find in a full length novel. The pace is fast and yet not in the least hurried. She ensures her readers arrive at the airport with her heroine and the scenery is so well written it is absorbed without detracting from the action, and there's plenty of action.

When Dixie Rose Kincaid returns home after an absence of seven years the last person she expects to see is Mike Dalton. She's at the point of accepting another man's proposal, but in seconds her reaction to Mike brings back memories she wished to forget. He creates emotional reactions she doesn't understand. After all she hates him and his part in

her humiliation all those years ago. And she's well aware of his contempt for her and her childhood obsession with his brother.

Her life as a well known rock star masks her personal loneliness, and she can't think of anyone close enough to her to see the real Dixie Rose, so when Mike forces her to face her past, she's not real pleased with him.

When Mike's young daughter meets Dixie Rose she wants to adopt her as her 'pretend mom'. Mike knows only too well how his daughter feels, after all he's loved Dixie for as long as he can remember.

Both main characters experience their personal journey to find their happy ever after, and the secondary characters blend in superbly. I firmly believe this is a story any reader will enjoy.

Rating: 4.5 Books
Review by Fennel

For one reason or another, Dixie has not been home in seven years to see her mom or her brothers. Her father had died three years ago and Dixie had flown in for the funeral and then left. Her sister, Audrey died the next year, but Dixie had not seen Mike in seven years. There is an electrical current running between them. Why is he at the airport instead of her family? Is he still running interference for his brother Kevin? Dixie has been "in love" with Kevin, but he never returned the feelings. Maybe there is hope now. But why did Mike still get her so discombobulated? He affects her like no other man, not even Kevin whom she thought she is still in love with. Would Kevin be happy to see her?

Dixie visits Audrey's grave at the cemetery and while there, a thunderstorm comes up and she runs to her "thinking tree." She thinks about her co-worker Ed who had asked her to marry him. She thinks about Kevin and wonders if he still cares about her, and she thinks about Mike and wonders just what is happening between him and her. In the meantime, water comes up from the ravine and floods the area. Dixie is totally confused about where she is, gets her foot caught between two rocks and almost drowns; but Mike comes to the rescue. Is Mike her personal tracker? Explain his being there all the time. When Dixie wakes up at her stepmother's house, a little girl is watching her and she yells for "Grandma Emmy.". Curiosity makes Dixie ask the pixie who she is and she explains, "I'm Mandy. Amanda." Dixie asks Mike about being married and he explains that his wife was killed in a car wreck when Amanda was a baby. Mandy's almost four and living next door to Emily, the child fell in love with her, and he couldn't stop the love. Mandy thinks of the twins, Will and Tom, as her brothers, and the boys think of Mike as their brother. One big happy family? One that goes frog giggin' together. You have to read this wonderful story for yourself to find out what this is.

In comes Uncle Paul, her dad's brother, and upsets the "apple cart." Every family has an Uncle Paul who wants everything. He accuses Dixie of coming home only for the reading of the will, hoping that her dad has left the house to her. Dixie is shocked, and so is everyone else. Does Dixie stay in town for a while? Does she tell Uncle Paul where he can go? Does Emily tell Dixie why she wants her home other than missing her? Does Mike tell Dixie that he's dating Janet? Why does Dixie sit on the ground and have disastrous results?

PRETEND MOM is told in the first person and is very nostalgic. It takes you back to the times of clean living and is about home, family and small town people. You don't lock your doors with these people. You open up your heart to them and it comes back ten fold. I used to live in a small town in NJ and for years, we knew all the neighbors and when you went to the grocery store, you walked and brought back groceries for the older people. You did what you could for people without looking for monetary compensation.

Rita Hestand has penned another winner for me with PRETEND MOM. I absolutely love this story as all my emotions are tested. I say it's a winner!!

By Romance Junkies Reviewer Phyllis Ingram

Rock star singing sensation Dixie Kincaid isn't happy with her life, despite her success. Going home for a visit after three long years, she plans to relax, spend time with her family, and resolve old feelings about her high school crush, Kevin. When she arrives, however, Kevin's brother, Mike, is the one to meet her at the airport...and go froggigging with her and her brothers...and it's Mike's precocious daughter who wants Dixie to be a pretend mom.

Years and miles of separation are between Dixie and Mike, not to mention the old fiasco with Kevin. Mike reminds Dixie of everything she loves about her hometown, but he blows hot and cold and hasn't made any official commitments. Soon, Dixie realizes she must choose between her job in New York and the man she's coming to love.

The characters in Pretend Mom are delightful – small-town, full of quirks and whimsy, and utterly loveable. Dixie, whose successful career somehow isn't all she dreamed it would be, is a down-to-earth and sweetly "girl-next-door" sort of heroine, and Mike is a hero practically any woman can dream about. The addition of a secondary romance, a few adorable children, and spiteful rumors that abound in any small town create a setting that compels the reader to grab a blanket and settle in until the end of the story.

Rita Hestand's writing style is refreshing and fun. Lighthearted and enjoyable, Pretend Mom is a book I read in one sitting, and it left a smile on my face when I finally put it down. This one is happily recommended, and I'll be eager for more stories from Ms. Hestand!

- Ivy Quill Reviews

PRETEND MOM is a lighthearted romance with likable characters in Dixie and Mike. They have an understandable fear of letting someone get close to their heart. Mandy is a lovable child and only in the story as necessary. There has been much criticism about picking up a romance and it being more about the children than the adults, but this book doesn't have that problem. I liked Mandy and the part about the pretend Mom.

Reviewed by Hattie Boyd

"Charming" is the word for this story. Dixie Rose Kincaid is winsome and engaging, warm and loving, stubborn and protective, strong yet vulnerable. Mike Dalton seems on the surface to be someone who is in firm control of his life and his emotions. As the story unfolds, however, the reader begins to suspect that beneath his calm facade beats the heart of a man who has not yet come to terms with old regrets and uncertainties. The subplot that tells the story of the love affair between Emily, Dixie's stepmother, and Bernie the barber, is evidence that love knows no age, no clime....

Ms. Hestand captures the essence of life in a small Texas community and uses it as the backdrop for an engaging story of love, loss, growth and reconciliation.

Review by Billie Houston
Blue Iris Journal

Dixie Rose Kincaid always seems to need rescuing from situations involving water; a flooding creek, a pond which she dashes into to rid herself of ants will frog giggin, and beting the target in a knock-the-girl-into-the-water booth at the church bazaar. Mike, as usual, provides the strong arms that comfort her, calling her sweetheart, which is becoming addictive, especially when accompanied by a mega-watt smile.

Dixie is torn in so many directions by her career demands, the pressure from her manager to marry him though their relationship is mainly business, her burgeoning feelings for Mike, and her love for Mandy that she is unable to make decisions for the future. Mike doesn't help by being amorous one day and cool the next. What's a girl to do? And how can a man compete with a successful career?

This is a charming story of family love, putting the past to rest, and realizing love too late. Or is it? I liked this book and believe that Harlequin Romance would have been a good target for publication as well. I hope you have another book for me to review shortly, Rita. Hmmm????

DOVIE'S REVIEWS AT ROMANCE CENTRAL

Pretend Mom by Rita Hestand is definitely a must for romance readers. Headstrong and independent Dixie has no idea what hit her when she runs smack into the arms of Mike, a foe from her past. Spine tingling affection and adoration fill this book to the brim for a magnificent time of reading and enjoyment. What woman in her right mind wouldn't want a devastating hunk of a man and a darling daughter to fill the void in her life? Read Pretend Mom and live the love of Dixie, Mike and Mandy as they defeat their pasts and take hold of a bright and blessed future.

Kim's Reviews~~Reviewed by Kim Gaona <http://kimgaona.com>

I thoroughly enjoyed Rita Hestand's characters in this book. I read this book very quickly because I was immersed in the lives of Dixie, Mike and their respective families. Rita created some very likable characters in this book. I enjoyed reading about each and every one of them. I look forward to reading more of Rita's books.

From Kathy Boswell of FAVS AND RAVS

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