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Posted on 08 October 2019 By Stephen P. Kiernan

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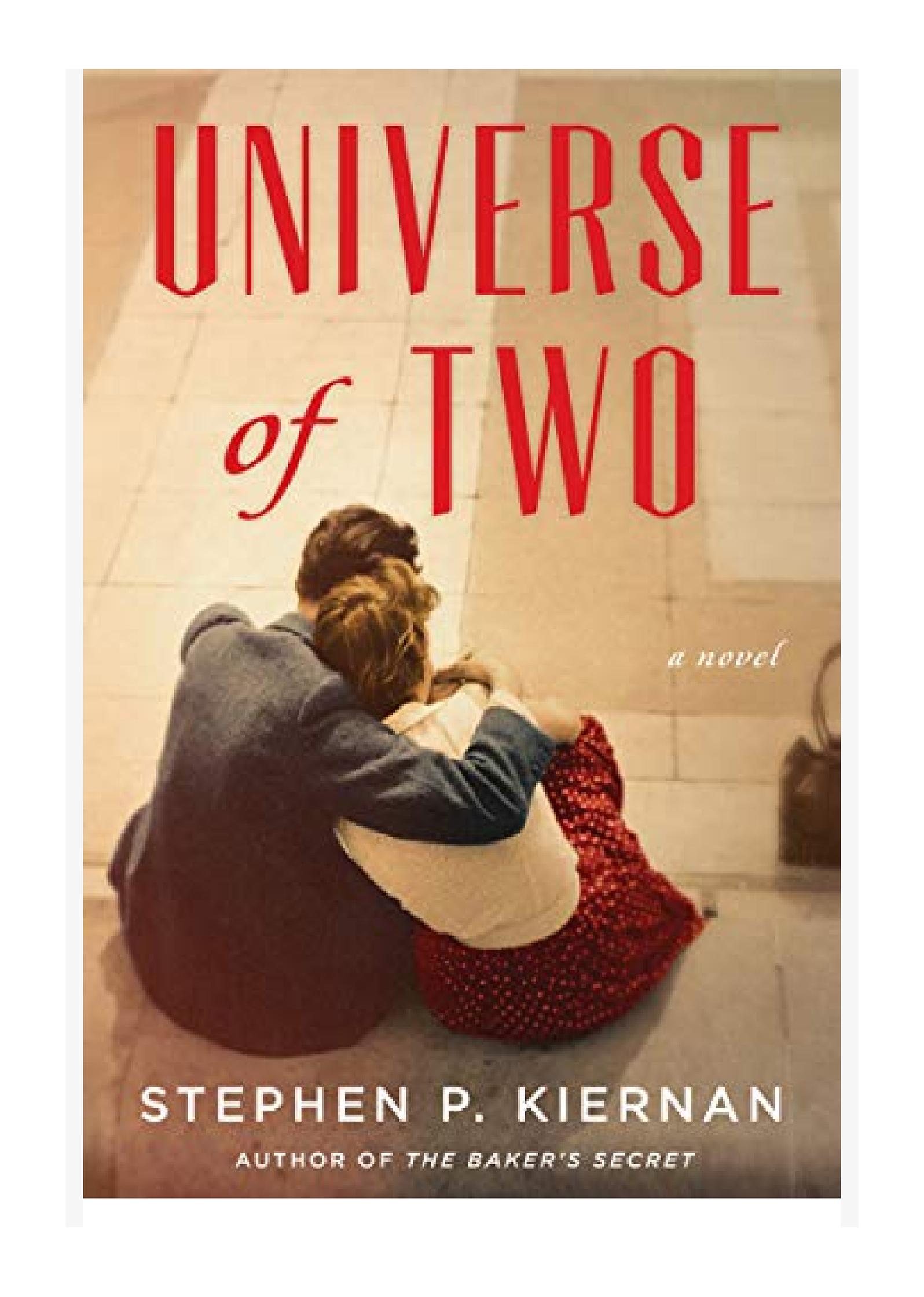
Stephen P Kiernan really knows how to tell a good story, and on a variety of topics, which constantly impresses me because it s relatively easy to keep telling basically the same story

with different characters, varied locations, etc., but to go from a frozen man found in Antarctica, to a hospice nurse dealing with a patient and also a husband with PTSD, to a brave young woman in a small French village during WWII, to a mathematician working on a detonator for an atomic bomb to be able to pull that off in well written, very thought provoking books is truly a gift I had the pleasure of meeting him in Manchester, Vermont at a Booktopia event after *The Hummingbird* was published, and he spoke with such passion about hospice that the book became even memorable to me This one will stay with me for quite some time, as well. My deepest appreciation to the author, HarperCollins, and Tavia Kowalchuk for the ARC of this impressive work of historical fiction The book will be available on August 4, 2020. I won this book in a giveaway and I really enjoyed reading it The chapters alternate between the two protagonists perspective Brenda is written in first person and Charlie in third person I wondered about the reason for the change until the end of the book, when we realize that the entire story is Brenda s to tell. The heart of the narrative revolves around their budding romance as Charlie questions the moral and ethical repercussions of the atomic bomb Charlie feels personally responsible for his role in creating the destruction that takes so many Japanese lives at the end of WW2, which can t help but affect his relationship with Brenda Brenda is a self absorbed twit for a lot of the book, although she s l o w l y becomes a kinder, gentler person as Charlie wrestles with his conscious. My biggest complaint is that, in the back cover summary of the novel, Brenda is described as Charlie s wife She is not his wife until the last quarter of the book, which somewhat ruins some of the story line earlier on There s a which man will she choose moment that is less riveting because of the description on the back cover And there are only 30 pages in the book by the time the Japanese surrender half of the book summary is at the war s end I wish the description was summarizing the first 300 pages of the book instead of the last quarter of it. Overall, this is a great story, built loosely on the life of real life mathematician Charles Fisk The combination of romance and ethical struggles during the war kept my attention and wrapped me up with intrigue Just don t read the story summary before you begin the book. [Read Epub] ? Universe of Two ? From The Critically Acclaimed Author Of *The Baker S Secret* And *The Curiosity Comes A Novel Of Conscience, Love, And Redemption* A Fascinating Fictionalized Account Of The Life Of Charlie Fisk, A Gifted Mathematician Who Was Drafted Into Manhattan Project And Ordered Against His Morals To Build The Detonator For The Atomic Bomb With His Musician Wife, He Spends His Postwar Life Seeking Redemption And They Find It Together Graduating From Harvard At The Height Of World War II, Brilliant Mathematician Charlie Fish Is Assigned To The Manhattan Project Working With Some Of The Age S Greatest Scientific Minds, Including J Robert Oppenheimer, Enrico Fermi, And Leo Szilard, Charlie Is Assigned The Task Of Designing And Building The Detonator Of The Atomic Bomb As He Performs That Work Charlie Suffers A Crisis Of Conscience, Which His Wife, Brenda Unaware Of The True Nature Of Charlie S Top Secret Task Mistakes As Self Doubt She Urges Him To Set Aside

His Qualms And Continue Once The Bombs Strike Hiroshima And Nagasaki, The Feelings Of Culpability Devastate Him And Brenda At The War S End, Charlie Receives A Scholarship To Pursue A PhD In Physics At Stanford An Opportunity He And Brenda Hope Will Allow Them A Fresh Start But The Past Proves Inescapable All Any Of His New Colleagues Can Talk About Is The Bomb, And What Greater Atomic Weapons Might Be On The Horizon Haunted By Guilt, Charlie And Brenda Leave Stanford And Decide To Dedicate The Rest Of Their Lives To Making Amends For The Evil He Helped To Birth Into The WorldBased On The Life Of The Actual Mathematician Charles B Fisk, Universe Of Two Combines Riveting Historical Drama With A Poignant Love Story Stephen Kiernan Has Conjured A Remarkable Account Of Two People Struggling To Heal Their Consciences And Find Peace In A World Forever Changed Parts of this book made me sad and parts were just plain wonderful I really enjoyed reading this book.This, I think, may be the first time I ve read a book where one POV, Brenda, is written in the first person and the other POV, Charlie, is written in the third person That change between first and third person worked very well in this story because Brenda is telling us about the past and Charlie is her past.The author did such an incredible job in defining these two characters that I almost felt as those I understood them and their thinking and reacting to what was happening around and to them Brenda is living in a whirl of young soldiers about to go to war and she does her part by dancing with them, going to the movies and occasionally allowing a quick kiss goodbye Charlie is a mathematician and, because of his uncle, is swept up into a government project that will eventually end in a crisis of conscience for him Somehow, these two find each other and slowly are drawn together against the background of WWII.The author has obviously done a lot of research which is evident throughout the book This story takes place during WWII but it is very different then most WWII stories that I have read It takes place in the USA at a time that the US was fighting on two fronts, one in Europe and the other in the Pacific It is about the incredible amount of work and effort that went into the development of what some hoped would put an end to all wars Sadly, as we now know, there is no such thing ,and the development of the research at Los Alamos was just the beginning of a new and now somewhat frightening era in the world.Thank you to The Book Club Girls, Harper Collins Publishers Inc., Net Galley and the author Stephen P Kiernan. I honestly have no idea why I can t get into this book.I hate to stop a book before I finish it.There s not a thing wrong with this book.I m just over halfway through and I can t get into it.I think it s the talk of Charlie s job that doesn t work for me.I can tell everyone else who read this book loves it, but I m around 200 pages in and I can t stick with it.I especially hate to do that with an early release I always appreciate getting to read a book early and I don t want an early review to reflect negatively.Books are always personal preference and this book and I don t fit together.I was set an early copy of this book from The Book Club Girl and received it through NetGalley.Thanks This was a beautiful story When a fictional book is based on a real person it s sometimes hard for me to focus because I keep

wondering how much of it is real and what was made up by the author That wasn't the case for me with Universe of Two, because it's so sweet and romantic that it really sucks you in You wouldn't expect a story about Project Y to work well as a love story but I thought it was wonderful Do yourself a favor and listen to the music mentioned in this book as you read All of the songs are easily found on YouTube, played on an organ, and you will get the full effect of how meaningful the music is and how well it fits the story I promise if you read this book you will fall in love with Charlie Fish and gain a new respect for the real life versions of these characters and what they experienced. This book took me completely by surprise I really liked Kiernan's earlier book The Baker's Secret so felt comfortably sure that I would enjoy this one But I never imagined that a book, inspired by the life of the man that developed the detonator for the atom bomb, would, or even could, contain such beautiful writing and feelings of such tenderness My heart really felt as though it would break for Charlie as he struggled with his consciousness for creating a device the Gadget that took so many lives The story opens with Charlie's musician wife Brenda looking back on her life with Charlie I could sense the moments of regret she had for not always appreciating Charlie for his best qualities Then their love story plays out throughout the rest of the book. But this book is much more than a love story While one side of Charlie was the mathematician, he also had a strongly sensitive side that loved working on organs Yes, organs He later went on to build organs I learned quite a bit about the beauty and complexity of the organ as I read the book But I also enjoyed the chapters that dealt with the scientific work Charlie did Charlie's feelings of guilt and redemption were remarkably balanced the greatest kinds of strength are hidden, and move slowly, and cannot be stopped by anything until they have changed the world Which he did twice The character development was superb, giving a vast array of people who were a part of Charlie and Brenda's life All the characters were presented in ways that I actually had an emotional response to them, whether it was Charlie's fellow workers some of whom also dealt with their own moral dilemmas or the townspeople who engaged with Brenda The townspeople, who provided the support services, for the men on the Hill had no idea what was being developed They all felt completely authentic with their strengths and their flaws Whatever you love, no matter how fiercely, you will lose it one day That is the only certainty Therefore be as kind as you can Thanks to the publisher William Morrow for a copy of this book to read and review All opinions are my own. This story is loosely based on one of the men who helped develop the triggering mechanism for the first atomic bomb Charlie Fish, a mathematician, is recruited to work on a secret project in 1943 However, it is not his math skills but his recently acquired soldering skills that land him in Los Alamos at the nerve center of the development of the atomic bomb He is tasked to develop a triggering mechanism that can create many simultaneous explosions At first Charlie is in the dark about what his work is for but gradually comes to the realization what his project is for and the damage it will inflict At the same time this is also a love story of the romance between

Charlie and his would be girl friend Brenda Here the book in alternating chapters follows Brenda s thoughts and telling the story of the world Charlie finds himself immersed in The making of the atomic bomb and Charlie and Brenda s relationship creates an interesting dichotomy As the effort to split the atom progresses, so do the efforts of the couple to knit a life together despite the instability of their lives. The book explores the moral issues of the use of the atomic bomb as well as the effect on the people who created the bombs that killed so many people Can one build a life, a universe of two as it were, with a conscience that bears guilt about such carnage Can one atone for such an action can one restore enough sacredness into a life that participated in such profanity The book works on all levels I enjoyed the characters and the plot It touched on many issues without being heavy handed and the ending, which had a basis in reality, was enjoyable Another excellent story from the author Five stars. There is so much in this gem, history, romance, philosophy, music, music, music The music almost seemed a character Not always an easy book to read. There had to be an unbelievable amount of research to get this book to publication again, the history, bomb building, the music. As a former church organist, I understood the organ sections, especially the Bach Toccata and Fugue and playing sick instrument. I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop since the story is told partially through the voice and experiences of the women who lived the story, but we quickly understand she is telling it from a much modern 1986 date. If you haven t read Stephen Kiernan yet, this is a good place to start. This is a quite interesting novel very loosely based on the life of Charles Fisk, who worked on the design of the detonator for the atomic bomb in the 1940 s I m not usually fond of historical novels that include fiction than fact but I did enjoy this one There s also the love story between Charles and Brenda, which I wasn t that fond of What I found most fascinating about this book was when it focused on Charles dawning realization of just what he was working on and what implications it could have on this world Recommended.



UNIVERSE *of* TWO

a novel

STEPHEN P. KIERNAN

AUTHOR OF *THE BAKER'S SECRET*

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The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents
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