

A Review of

Change of Heart

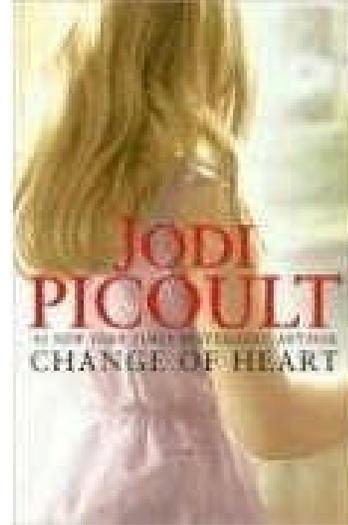
(a fictional novel)

Author: Jodi Picoult

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

While I typically review books of real-life transplant stories, let me make it clear up front that this is a novel, a real summer beach reader work of fiction, and my highest rating would be to describe it as a “1-nighter” – that is, a reading so engrossing that I couldn’t do it in my typical week long enjoyment reading, rather sat down and finished it in one day. No it’s not a particularly short book (447 pages) and I am not an especially fast reader.

It’s just one of those that once started, I couldn’t put it down and that’s my 5-Star rating system.



I am not familiar with this popular author, but with this experience, I intend to look into some of her fourteen books which I hope are equally mesmerizing, and that is a good word to describe this one. In one story we have so many interesting issues interwoven into easy to read, short chapter narratives, each from the perspective of individual characters. As a heart transplant recipient very involved in the organ donation and transplant field for some 14 years now, I was fascinated with her treatment of the ethical issue of a death row inmate desperately trying to atone for his murder of a young girl by donating his heart to the younger sister of that victim. I should mention that when I read a novel like this, I suspend my realism logic and just enjoy the story as it is presented, not trying to critically judge the possible reality of its actions. But there is enough connection to current news events to make it just real enough to be very interesting. The author has done her homework in so many areas for this story, from the heart transplant process to the religion of the Gnostic gospels, from miracles to legal debate over religious freedom and prisoner rights, from altruistic organ donation to cellular memory in transplanted organs, from the heart donation recovery process to methods of carrying out the death sentence to make that a possibility – enough to keep the mind challenged with a story line that could be in the evening news, well almost. There’s the murder of a stepfather policeman and his daughter, the mother conflicted with accepting this life saving altruistic heart donor for her dying other daughter from the family’s murderer, the guilt complex of a Catholic priest, counselor to the death-row inmate, who was on the jury years ago that convicted him, a transplant doctor’s love affair with the Jewish ACLU lawyer attempting to defend the same inmate, and enough surprise twists to keep the most knowledgeable reader guessing to the final page (and yes, while a mouthful, honestly that’s how the book reads and I really haven’t spoiled it by giving away the surprise ending that will still leave you guessing!).