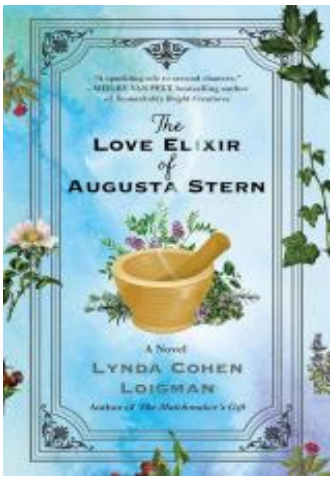
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The Love Elixir of Augusta Stern

by Lynda Cohen Loigman



About the Book

It's never too late for new beginnings.

On the cusp of turning 80, newly retired pharmacist Augusta Stern is adrift. When she relocates to Rallentando Springs, an active senior community in southern Florida, she unexpectedly crosses paths with Irving Rivkin, the delivery boy from her father?s old pharmacy --- and the man who broke her heart 60 years earlier.

As a teenager growing up in 1920s Brooklyn, Augusta?s role model was her father, Solomon Stern, the trusted owner of the local pharmacy and the neighborhood expert on every ailment. But when Augusta?s mother dies and Great Aunt Esther moves in, Augusta can?t help but be drawn to Esther?s curious methods. As a healer herself, Esther offers Solomon?s customers her own advice --- unconventional remedies ranging from homemade chicken soup to a mysterious array of powders and potions.

As Augusta prepares for pharmacy college, she is torn between loyalty to her father and fascination with her great aunt, all while navigating a budding but complicated relationship with Irving. Desperate for clarity, she impulsively uses Esther?s most potent elixir with disastrous consequences. Disillusioned and alone, Augusta vows to reject Esther?s enchantments forever.

Sixty years later, confronted with Irving, Augusta is still haunted by the mistakes of her past. What happened all those years ago, and how did her plan go so spectacularly wrong? Did Irving ever truly love her, or was he simply playing a part? And can Augusta reclaim the magic of her youth before it?s too late?

Discussion Guide

1. How did it feel to read about active, witty, fun-loving 80-plus-year-old characters getting a second chance at romance?

What do you think this novel suggests about the correlation between age and a person?s spirit, and about hope and time?

2. What role do memories play in this novel? How do Augusta?s memories of her mother and Aunt Esther, and even her past with Irving, affect her present day?

3. On page 96, Esther tells Augusta, ?My mother and grandmother had kept their skills private, but I chose to share mine with others. Many in my village were grateful to me, especially when my powders cured them of illness.? What does this quote suggest about the importance of owning and sharing our gifts with others, even if they set us apart?

4. One theme woven throughout THE LOVE ELIXIR OF AUGUSTA STERN is the power of words. Discuss a time when words or stories have significantly impacted you.

5. Augusta ?believed in medicine and in miracles.... She believed in the power of moonlight in kitchens, in the power of women, in the power of words? (page 304). What do you think the novel suggests about recognizing gray areas, rather than thinking purely in black and white?

6. What role does grief play in Augusta?s and Solomon?s lives, and in their relationship? Compare and contrast how Augusta, Solomon and Bess each react to grief.

7. On page 223, Esther states, ?They say the leaves can unlock emotions.... It helps to open a closed mind.? In what ways does the novel nod to nature?s healing qualities?

8. In the old country, Esther was deemed a witch for her interest in healing, while men who shared the same interests were encouraged to become doctors and pharmacists. Decades later, even Solomon considered Esther a ?quack.? What does this say about society at the time? Do you think a similar line of thinking is still present today?

9. How impactful could it have been if Solomon had worked with Esther --- joining his wisdom with her insight? How did Augusta benefit, if at all, from observing the importance of possessing both of their attributes, and having both Solomon and Esther as mentors?

10. When young Augusta found herself frustrated with her own progress in comparison to Esther?s masterful talents, Esther reminded her to ?not mistake a few successes for an unblemished past? (page 193). How does this quote make you feel? Have you caught yourself comparing your imperfections to others? assumed perfection?

11. On page 184, Augusta tells Shirley, ?Men didn?t appreciate career women back then? They wanted me to promise that I?d give up my job once I got married and gave them children.? Do you think Solomon ever felt burdened to choose between love and work with the same weight that Esther and Augusta felt? How did this impact the two women?s lives?

12. Why was it so important for Augusta to tell Irving what the elixir was for, before she gave it to him?

13. Even if Esther couldn?t ?fix? all who come to her, she saw value in at least offering comfort. How was this integral to her identity as a healer?

14. Augusta has a special connection with swimming. It calms her mind, and the ocean in particular makes her feel part

of something bigger. Do you have a hobby that has a similar grounding effect on you?

15. How did the end of the novel make you feel?

Author Bio

Lynda Cohen Loigman is the author of THE LOVE ELIXIR OF AUGUSTA STERN, THE MATCHMAKER'S GIFT, THE WARTIME SISTERS and THE TWO-FAMILY HOUSE. She received a B.A. in English and American Literature from Harvard College and a J.D. from Columbia Law School. She grew up in Longmeadow, MA, and now lives in New York.

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