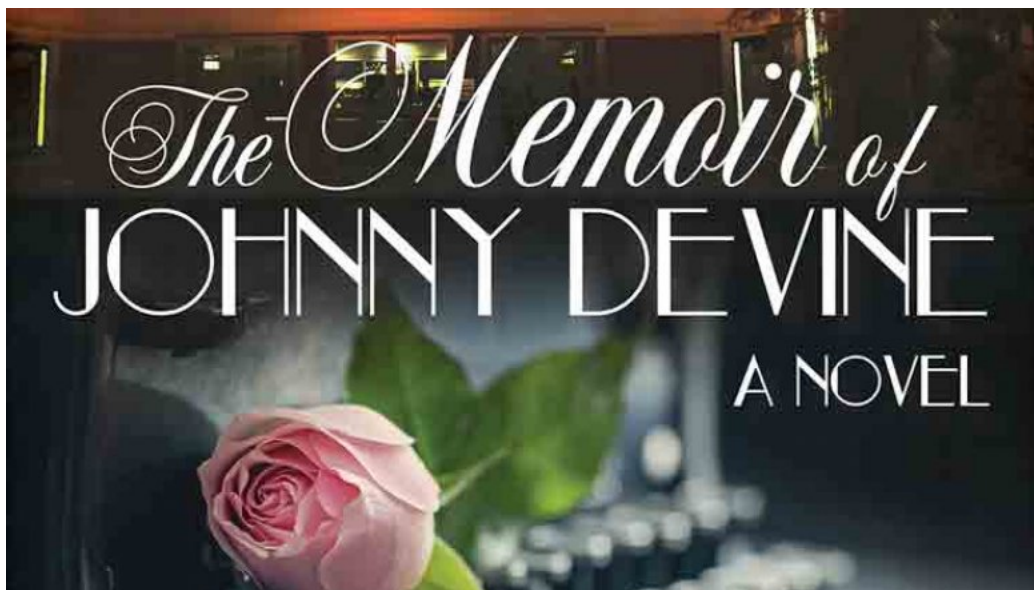


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DECEMBER 2015 SEAL OF EXCELLENCE

Tue, 12/22/2015 - 2:00pm — [RT Book Reviews](#)

Each month the *RT* editors select one book that is not only compelling, but pushes the boundaries of genre fiction. This book stands out from all the others reviewed that month, in the magazine issue and on the website. December 2015's *RT* Seal of Excellence — the editors' pick for best book of the month — is awarded

to *The Memoir of Johnny Devine* by Camille Eide!

I am having a difficult time finding the words to describe exactly how much I loved *The Memoir of Johnny Devine*. Religion, particularly as a person's saving grace, is a deeply personal and highly subjective topic.

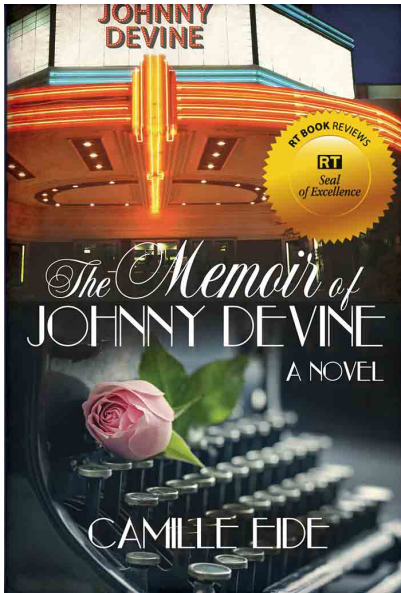
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[RT 2016 Convention Recap: A Girls' Night](#)



However, Camille Eide introduces the plot point with such sensitivity and respect that it's easy to identify with the characters. I cannot tell you how much I loved reading about an educated, unmarried woman making her own way in the 1950s. In a time where women were expected to stay home, marry and take care of the household, our heroine Eliza is committed to her career and correcting social injustice. Her intelligence, sensitivity and grace immediately endear her to her new boss, the famous Hollywood heartthrob Johnny Devine (whom I pictured as George Clooney... you'll see what I mean when you read). The most intriguing (and also disturbing) thing about this story is that despite the 1950s setting, the need for gender and racial equality as well as the ongoing witch hunt that is the Red Scare are very relevant today, in 2015, and I applaud Eide for being a part of the conversation. She has managed to intertwine a beautiful love story, the desire to build a personal relationship with God and the necessity for social change into one truly fantastic

read. — *Kristin Wise*

I didn't know what to expect when I started *The Memoir of Johnny Devine*. But from the very first page, Camille Eide swept me off my feet and straight into 1950s Hollywood. The McCarthy-era Red Scare came to vivid life, as did the mid-century struggle for racial and gender equality. More importantly, though, the characters came to fully realized, fleshed-out, three-dimensional life. Eliza, a writer in her early 30s, is bold and brave while still feeling vulnerable and sensitive, and John is one of the warmest, most heartbreaking characters. The relationship that forms between the two of them is so very needed and welcome, and reading their story left me feeling warm and fuzzy. But one of the real standouts for me was Millie. John's elderly housekeeper, Millie is a kind, compassionate and totally unique character. She at once falls into the wise-old-housekeeper stereotype while somehow also defying convention and becoming so much more than the trope she was created to fit. I fell as much in love with her as I did John and Eliza, and I wish the book had had another hundred pages so I could spend more time with all three of them. — *Jennifer Peters*

One of the best things about having to read books to select a Seal of Excellence title each month is all of the surprises that await. You get to read from a host of pre-selected, excellent books that you might normally never pick up. And such is the case with *Johnny Devine*. It's one of those books that from the first page, you're not quite sure what you kind of story you're getting, but you know it's going to be a good one, a tale that grows more excellent with each turn of the page. — *Elissa Petruzzi*

Here are the other books we considered for our November 2015 Seal of Excellence Award:

[RT Convention 2016 Recap: A Seat At The Table](#)

[RT Exclusive Excerpt: A Totally Awkward Love](#)

[Forewords — The Books Before the Buzz](#)

[Tweetharts: Tweets We Loved This Week](#)

RECENT REVIEWS



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by Helen Hardt



IN THE DARK
by Lila Rose



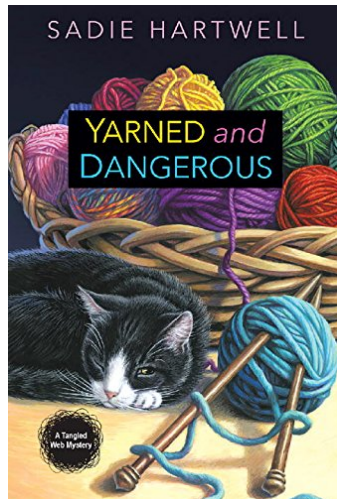
HIS FIRST CHOICE
by Tara Taylor Quinn



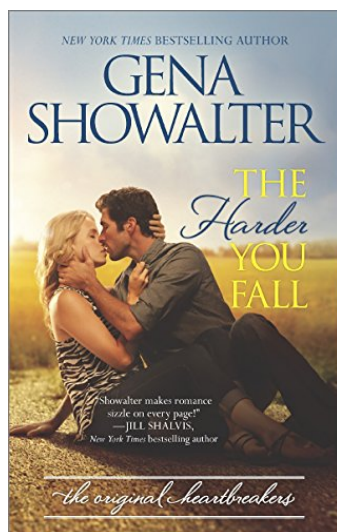
THE GOOD FATHER
by Tara Taylor Quinn



SEEK AND FIND
by Dana Mentink



I love a good mystery, and Sadie Hartwell's *Yarned and Dangerous* is really a delight. Her descriptions are spot on, her secondary characters are funny without being overly silly, and she made me want to pull out my neglected knitting projects — just as soon as I uncovered the identity of the killer, of course. It's always a delight to discover a new series just as it's beginning — although of course now I have to wait for the second book! — *Elissa Petruzzi*

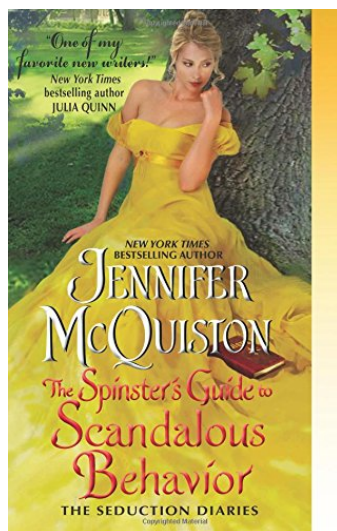


Gena Showalter mixes wit and sass with gritty, emotional baggage in her latest Original Heartbreakers installment, *The Harder You Fall*. Here our spitfire heroine Jessie Kay completely steals the show. You'll love her for her crazy commentary — "Apparently, all a guy had to do to find his soul mate was screw Jessie Kay," — and the sweet side she shows through her devotion to her sister. Romance fans will find no trouble following Jessie Kay and West's story, and all the craziness that goes along with it, right to that HEA. — *Danielle Valente*



Lauren Dane's worlds are always intensely, fully realized — no matter the subgenre she's writing, and it's such a treat for the reader, who really gets to submerge themselves in the lives of these characters.

In *Coming Back* Dane takes on a trio desperately fighting for what they want most in the world — each other. In between scorching scenes the characters tackle the sometimes formidable task of letting the world know about their arrangement — and that it's for keeps. Excellent! — *Elissa Petruzzi*



The Spinster's Guide to Scandalous Behavior by Jennifer McQuiston

I was totally unprepared for just how delightful *The Spinster's Guide to Scandalous Behavior* would be. Peppered with entries from the diary of Edith Lucille Westmore, our heroine's deceased aunt, *Spinster's Guide* is effortlessly charming. Thomas, Lord Branston, is so refreshing — he's willing to give the very high-spirited and fiercely independent Lucy her space yet he remains a strong, sexy and steadfast hero. Even better, he's an intellectual man of science, which sent this nerd swooning. For her part, Lucy is a tough, tomboyish heroine — I loved following her journey from committed yet naive spinster to a mature woman ready to accept love. This is the first time I've read McQuiston, but she's absolutely going on my auto-buy list! — *Regina Small*



What would you do if your entire life suddenly turned upside-down? That's the question in *Secret Sisters* by Jayne Ann Krentz. If you're Madeline, you rely on your personal bodyguard, Jack, as well as your childhood best friend, Daphne, to help you figure out the answers to all the problems suddenly plaguing you — and you do it all while falling in love and rekindling an old friendship. I spent most of this book wondering what the truth might be, until I finally turned the page and got my “ah-ha” moment of revelation. It was a fun, fast-paced story that kept me guessing, and the romance was mixed in perfectly, without overwhelming the important friendship and mystery elements. Fans of romantic suspense will definitely appreciate this one. — Jennifer Peters

Congratulations to the winner and all of the nominees! You can find all of our Seal of Excellence winners [here](#).

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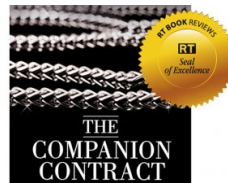
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ALSO ON RT BOOK REVIEWS

Profiling Love Interests: Cynthia Ruchti's Song Of Silence

1 comment • 19 days ago

Cynthia Ruchti — In case anyone is looking for my impossible last name, it's R-u-c-h-t-i, and is pronounced as if the first syllable rhymes with ...

Shadowhunters Recap: S1, E 13: Spring Awakening

1 comment • 20 days ago

Tania Stanwood — I think this is not a bad show. I like the fantasy genre so I like this series. Although I don't watch much TV I prefer to read. I am reading Ben ...

RT 2016 Convention: Thursday Parties Photo Recap!

1 comment • 11 days ago

Denise S — The Keith Milano Memorial Fund was honored to be apart of RT16. We were overwhelmed by the support for the fund and our cause to raise ...

Audiobook Glveaway: Audible's April Picks!

45 comments • a month ago

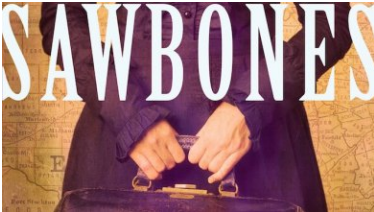
Bella Love — I loved Sidebarred by Emma Chase!

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ROMANCE



The Truth about Victorian Sex with Melissa Lenhardt

Hump Day Excerpt: Temptations of a Wallflower


Exclusive Excerpt: Laura Kaye's Ride Hard

Exclusive Excerpt: Jude Deveraux's The Girl From Summer Hill

Ye Olde Gambling Hells: A Reading List by Amy Sandas

Cover Breakdown: Susan Mallery's Daughters Of The Bride

MYSTERY



Exclusive Excerpt: Heather Graham's One-Eyed Jack From Romantic Times: Vegas

Behind The Scenes: T.M. Causey's The Saints Of The Lost And Found Cover

March 2016 Seal of Excellence

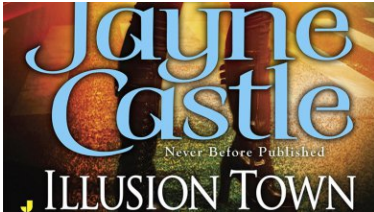
Cover Reveal: Lynn Cahoon's A Story To Kill

February 2016 Seal of Excellence

Exclusive Excerpt: Ann A. McDonald's The Oxford Inheritance

More Mystery »

PARANORMAL



Cover Breakdown: Jayne Castle's Illusion Town

We're back in the office after an awesome convention and ready to get this week going with an insightful cover breakdown! We have to admit...


Cover Breakdown: Magic Binds by Ilona Andrews

Cover Breakdown: Molly Harper's Big Vamp On Campus

Exclusive Excerpt: Runaway Vampire by Lynsay Sands

Dear Romanswer: The Seasons of Love

YOUNG ADULT



RT Exclusive Excerpt: A Total Awkward Love Story

Life and Death with Lurlene McD:

RT 2016 Convention: YA Spooky Slumber Party

Shadowhunters Recap: S1, E 13: Morning Star

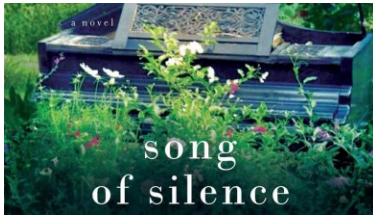
Shadowhunters Recap: S1, E 12: I

Cover Breakdown: Alessandra To Moonshot

More Young A

[More Romance »](#)[Exclusive Cover Reveal: Cari Z's Where There's a Will](#)[More Paranormal »](#)

INSPIRATIONAL



Profiling Love Interests: Cynthia Ruchti's *Song Of Silence*

We romance fans live fo

Fun Facts: Siri Mitchell's *Flirtation Walk*

Cover Breakdown: Wanda & Jean Brunstetter's *The Missing Will*

December 2015 Seal of Excellence

Love and Fiction Collide in James L. Rubart's *The Five Times I Met Myself*

2015 RT Reviewers' Choice Award Nominees — Inspirational, Young Adult, New Adult and Multicultural

[More Inspirational »](#)

MAINSTREAM



Cover Breakdown: Amy E. Reichert's *Luck, Love & Lemon Pie*

It's Tuesday and we're getting ready to kick off the first official day here at the RT Booklover's Convention in Las Vegas!

Debut Author Spotlight: Catherine Lowell's *The Madwoman Upstairs*

January 2016 Seal of Excellence

Exclusive Excerpt: Jacqueline Sheehan's *The Center Of The World*

Cover Reveal: Someone Else's Love Letter by Deborah Blumenthal

Cover Reveal: Lauren Baratz-Logsted's *Falling for Prince Charles*

[More Mainstream »](#)

SCIENCE FICTION



Cover Reveal and Giveaway: J.A. Rock's *The Silvers*

Feel like a cover reveal, or winning an e-advanced copy? Who wouldn't?! Today we're taking a peek at J.A.

Author Q&A: Helen Lowe on *Earthquakes, Prussian Generals and Rocking on the Porch*

Cover Breakdown: Taylor Anderson's *Blood In The Water*

2015 RT Reviewers' Choice Award Nominees — Science Fiction/Fantasy/Paranormal

Cover Breakdown: *Ring of Fire IV* by Eric Flint

July Seal of Excellence

[More Science Fiction »](#)

EROTICA



RT 2016 Convention: Beyond BDSM: Top Five Tips For Writers

The RT Booklovers' Convention is swing and besides having an absolutely amazing time at all the fabulous parties, we are l

Exclusive Excerpt: Maya Banks's *Dominated*

Exclusive Excerpt: Kylie Scott's *Dilemma*

Sneak Peek: Sylvia Day's *One with a View* Book Trailer

Exclusive Excerpt: Monica Murphy's *Never Let You Go*

Exclusive Excerpt: Violetta Rand's *Possession*

[More Erotica »](#)

