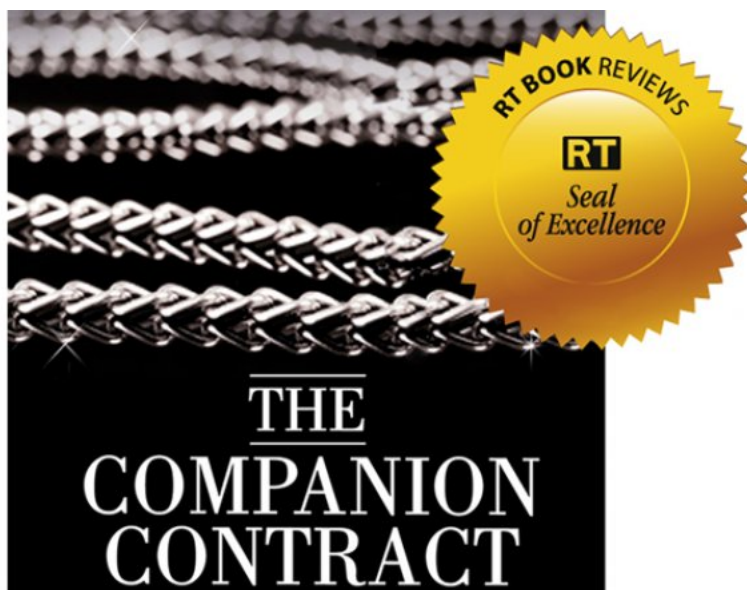


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FEBRUARY 2015 SEAL OF EXCELLENCE

Thu, 02/26/2015 - 2:40pm — [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. February 2015's *RT* Seal of Excellence — the editors' pick for best book of the month — is awarded to Solace Ames's erotic romance, *The Companion Contract*.

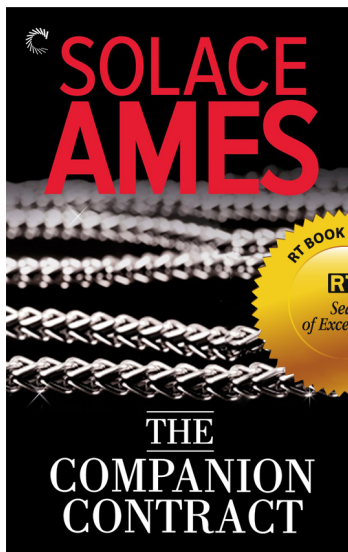
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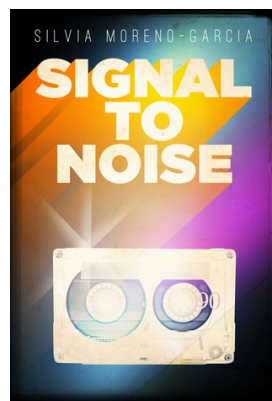
"I'm a strong advocate for romances where everyone has (or has had) a sexual relationship with everyone else. It just makes things more fun and the drama more intense. Solace Ames crafts a complicated web of relationships in *The Companion Contract*, making the secondary characters just as intriguing as the hero and heroine. Amy's friendships with Miles and Xiomara add depth, and while her romance with Emanuel is a bit slow to develop due to the nature of her contract, it makes it all the more satisfying when they finally get together. Also, I need Xiomara's book yesterday." — Elisa Verna

"*The Companion Contract* is such a gem — while Amy may (sometimes) enjoy playing the submissive, there's never a question that she's a capable and strong woman, in total control of her life. Watching her act as a friend to Miles, as he grapples with addiction and

rebuilding his life, is just as satisfying as seeing her fall for Emanuel. And brava to Solace Ames for writing Xiomara, a spirited heroine who deserves her own story. As a trans woman of color, Xiomara isn't the kind of character readers see all that often in romance, and Ames brings her to life with both vibrancy and humanity. More, please." — Regina Small

"Ames unapologetically takes us into her dark world, where her characters own their problems and their troubled pasts. It is this that sells the book for me, how Amy may not like where her life is right now, but she's working toward a solution and not feeling too badly about it along the way. Ames's writing is exquisite, evocative and descriptive without being overly so. Reading, you'll feel as if she lovingly selected just the right word, over and over again, until she completed the entire book. Impressive!" — Elissa Petruzzi

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



"I fell so hard for this impressive debut from [Silvia Moreno-Garcia](#). Set in Mexico City across two timelines, 1988 and 2009, *Signal to Noise* is a fresh spin on literary fantasy that won me over right from the beginning. As Meche comes home for her father's funeral in 2009, she reflects on the highs and lows of her high school experience — like discovering that she can cast spells using music. While Meche has just the right amount of teenage hubris and eyeroll-y contempt for her teachers, classmates and family, it's her friendship with Daniela and Sebastian, her fellow outcasts, that will strike a chord with every former (and current) outsider. And Sebastian and Meche's journey to discover the magic of the love they

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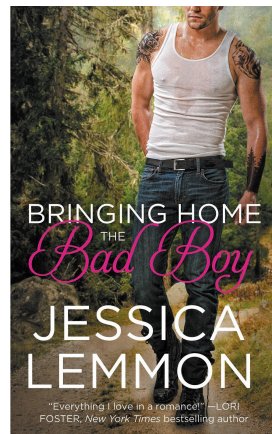


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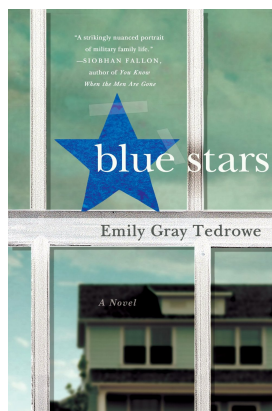
have for one another is just wonderful. This love letter to an offbeat adolescence — and the music and friends that get us through it — is a winner." — *Regina Small*



"*Playing By The Greek's Rules* by *Sarah Morgan* is full of delightful giggly fun. Also sex. So much sex. I loved the modern Cinderella start to this story and Lily's plan to use Nik for some hot no strings attached rebound sex. Playboy Nik assumes he will have no problem not falling for Lily but it's impossible not to love her. The chemistry between this couple is about as hot as the summer nights they spend together and the stunning descriptions of the Greek islands is enough to make anyone wish for a little time off. This story manages to be both playful and seductive with a couple of over the top moments that you won't mind because they're utterly worth it. If you're looking for a fast and hot read full of wish fulfillment you don't want to miss this book." — *Sarah McDaniel Dyer*



"The trope of falling for your deceased best friend's spouse can be a delicate one, but *Jessica Lemmon* pulls it off and then some. Charlie and Evan have both lost so much, and it's their mutual grief that brings them together. While loss is a central theme to the story, it doesn't drive the plot, which is instead moved forward by a cast of well-rounded characters. There's never any question of how much Evan loved his wife, and Charlie is patient and caring in helping him move on. *Bringing Home the Bad Boy* is the perfect read for anyone looking for a small town romance that digs a little deeper. And who can resist a sexy single father?" — *Elisa Verna*



"Emily Gray Tedrowe's *Blue Stars* is one of the most beautiful, heartbreaking books of the year — and it's only February! Inspired by a series of articles about the shortcomings of the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the mid-aughts, Tedrowe tells a story that makes the experiences of military families not only understandable, but relatable. Ellen, especially, is one of the most incredibly written characters, and her emotions felt particularly authentic. While the ending seemed to be tied up too neatly, it did not lessen the story's impact — and considering how much you want these characters to get a happy ending, it's impossible to imagine any other conclusion. You'll want to keep a box of tissues nearby, as you'll likely shed more than a few tears, but the runny mascara is worth it to experience this thought-provoking and emotional read." — 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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The Companion Contract sounds like a really good book. :)

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Ane Mulligan — Thank you, Patsy!

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45 comments · a month ago

Bella Love — I loved Sidebarred by Emma Chase!

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Kate Hearn — This sounds quite good! Must add to my summer list...thank you :)

Shadowhunters Recap: S1, E 13: Spring Awakening

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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 ...

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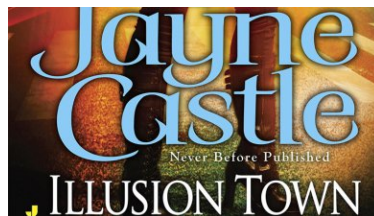
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To Kill

PARANORMAL

Cover Breakdown: Jayne Castle's
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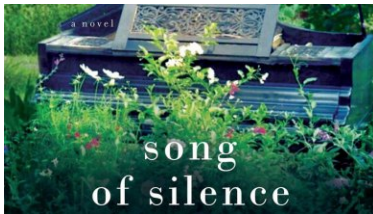
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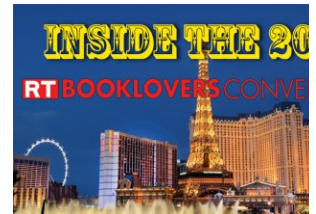
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