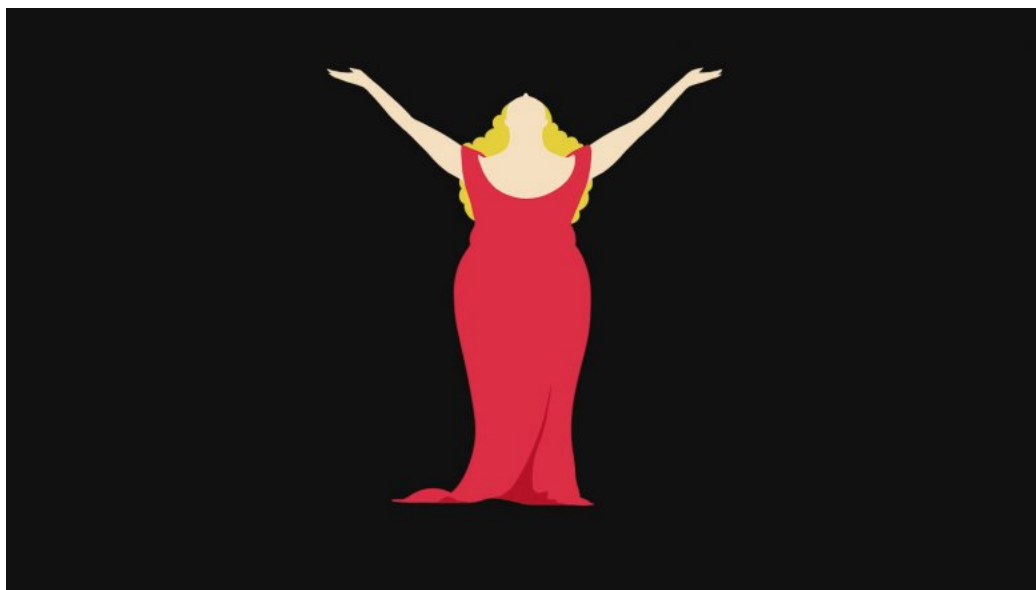


[LOGIN](#) [REGISTER](#)[Search](#)
[HOME](#)
[ROMANCE](#)
[MYSTERY](#)
[PARANORMAL](#)
[YOUNG ADULT](#)
[INSPIRATIONAL](#)
[MAINSTREAM](#)
[SCIENCE FICTION](#)
[EROTICA](#)
[Young Adult](#)

ADVERTISEMENT



SUBSCRIBE TO RT

[Magazine](#)[Newsletter](#)

More than 200 new books reviewed in every issue. Subscribe and save 50%!

Try a free [sample issue](#) of digital magazine.

SUBSCRIBE: [Print](#) | [Digit](#)

SEPTEMBER 2015 SEAL OF EXCELLENCE

Thu, 09/24/2015 - 12:00pm — [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. September 2015's *RT* Seal of Excellence — the editors' pick for best book of the month — is awarded to [Julie Murphy's](#)

YA novel [Dumplin'](#).

Believe the hype. *Dumplin'* is absolutely sensational. Willowdean Dickson is a lovable, relatable heroine with an abiding love for Dolly Parton (and who doesn't love Dolly?!) and for her best friend, Ellen Dryver.

APRIL RATINGS

Download the ratings for all the new book reviewed in the April issue, conveniently formatted on easily printable pages.

[Download Now >>](#)

RECENT POSTS

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



Right from the start, the narrative voice Murphy gives to Willowdean is so strong — *Dumplin'* is consistently funny, bittersweet and totally captivating. As Willowdean grapples with her burgeoning sexuality, her shifting and occasionally tense friendship with Ellen, and vacillates between a mature, healthy body image and all of the normal insecurities of adolescence, she truly comes into her own. And, with or without a pageant crown to show for it, that's coming out on top. — *Regina Small*

I had been hearing about Julie Murphy's *Dumplin'* for weeks before I finally read it, and I was incredibly nervous that it would be all hype. Oh, how happy I was to find out it was all it was cracked up to be — and then some! Willowdean Dickson reminds me of myself when I was younger, only so, so much braver and bolder and self-assured. I wish I'd had her chutzpah when I was 16 — or even now. That's not to say she's perfect, though I

wanted to believe she is. She's human, and she has flaws (though

her weight isn't one of them). And seeing her own that? Own her mistakes and her shortcomings and everything else, and to do it for her own peace of mind and not because someone told her she needed to? That was just ... all the things! I definitely ugly-cried on the bus reading this one, and I would do it again in a heartbeat if it meant another few charming pages full of Willowdean. — *Jennifer Peters*

I had the good luck of snagging an advance copy of *Dumplin'* at the 2015 RT Convention way back in May and I've been waiting, not so patiently, for everyone else to read it so that I could discuss the awesomeness with someone — anyone! I'm so, so excited for Willowdean to shine, as only she can. This is an important book for the YA genre, and I just know everyone's going to love it, appreciate it, treasure it. The small-town setting, the unconventional band of friends, the pageant, it's all so heartwrenching and true and wonderful. Yay, *Dumplin'*! — *Elissa Petruzzi*

I can't say enough good things about *Dumplin'*. It's great to have a protagonist who is overweight, but whose sole problem isn't the number on the scale. Willowdean's sense of self and her confidence are the kind of things I'd like to see in more YA protagonists. *Dumplin'* examines what it's like to grow up different and in someone else's glamorous shadow in a small town. A less skilled writer would have given Willowdean's fellow pageant wreckers flat personalities, but Murphy outfits each one with more depth than I'm used to seeing in side characters. This book makes you cheer for all of the characters, even as they make realistic mistakes. — *Sarah McDaniel Dyer*

Here are the other books we considered for our August 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



CRAVING
by Helen Hardt



IN THE DARK
by Lila Rose



HIS FIRST CHOICE
by Tara Taylor Quinn



THE GOOD FATHER
by Tara Taylor Quinn



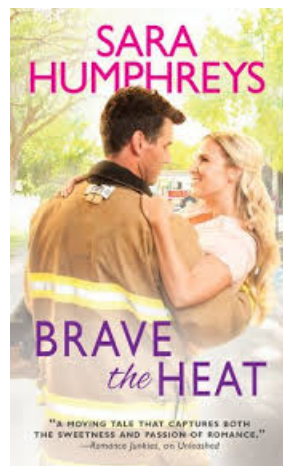
SEEK AND FIND
by Dana Mentink

Catherine Everleigh may be regarded as a bloodless ice queen in Meredith Duran's *Luck be a Lady*, but Nick O'Shea saw the blazing fire inside her as soon as they met. A fascinating couple, Catherine and Nick both live on the margins of polite society — Nick is a Robin Hood-esque gambling hell proprietor seeking to improve the lives of his Whitechapel fellows and all Catherine wants is to gain full control of her family's auction house from her embezzling brother. Not only do these two have a steamy physical connection, but they also share deep wounds from childhood — physical deprivations in Nick's case and emotional wounds in Catherine's. Together, they forge an unlikely yet poignant and believable bond.

— Regina Small

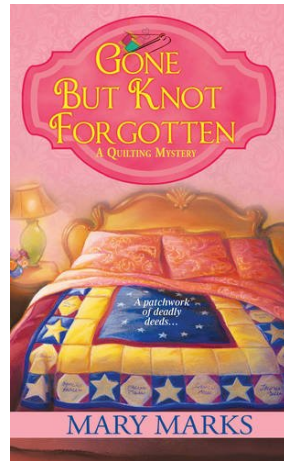


The other Alessandra Torre titles I've read have been dark, twisty wonders, but *Hollywood Dirt* is a straight-up, girl-meets-celebrity contemporary romance. And I am here to tell you that it is *delightful*. The hero and heroine steal the show. You'll be smitten by Cole and Summer from the very first page. The small-town setting is a hoot and a half, and Torre even pulls off the few requisite hard-to-believe twists required for a small-town girl to hook up with the hottest celebrity on the planet. Hey, if it happened to Matt Damon, then why not Cole Masten? Why not indeed. — Elissa Petruzzi



Sara Humphreys' *Brave the Heat* reminds us that true love really can conquer all. Jordan's past is dark and painful, but her love for her daughters provides an infallible strength, helping her to prevail. When her long lost love Gavin enters the picture, he gives the reader everything one could possibly want in a romantic hero. From his career as a fire chief to his crippling sense of accountability to his absolute adoration for Jordan and her girls, Gavin is utterly swoon-worthy at every turn. A mysterious arsonist unleashes a dark cloud over the romance, adding a touch of suspense, but the culprit is pretty easy to spot

if you're paying attention. Simply put, this story has it all: love, sex, suspense, danger — and just a hint of magic. — *Kristin Wise*



Gone but Knot Forgotten by [Mary Marks](#) is like if the Golden Girls went crime fighting. One of the Quilting Mysteries series, this cozy stands up all on its own with a cast of sassy, older quilting ladies. Martha Rose isn't your everyday cozy star, she's middle aged and her Jewish faith is important to her without taking over the plot. And she's no spinster, either! With several men pursuing her, Martha needs to decide if she wants to settle down or stay single. I mean, along with solving several murders and finding stolen goods! — *Sarah McDaniel Dyer*

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

GENRE: [Young Adult](#)

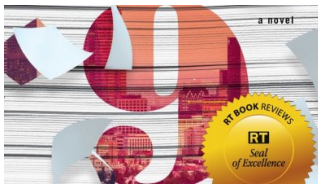
TAGS: [Seal of Excellence](#), [Julie Murphy](#), [Dumplin](#)

reddit

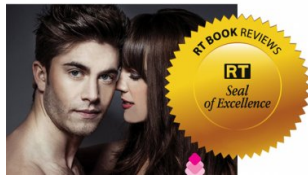
G+1

Like 283

RELATED POSTS



[November 2015 Seal of Excellence](#)



[March Seal of Excellence](#)



[April Seal of Excellence](#)

COMMENTS

Comments for this thread are now closed.

0 Comments

RT Book Reviews

1 Login

Recommend

Share

Sort by Best

This discussion has been closed.

ALSO ON RT BOOK REVIEWS

GHOST GIFTS

1 comment • 10 days ago

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

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 ...

HOME TO CHAPEL SPRINGS

1 comment • 15 days ago

Ane Mulligan — Thank you, Patsy!

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 ...

Subscribe

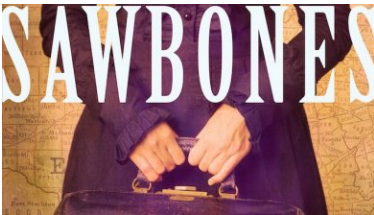
Add Disqus to your site

Add Disqus

Add

Privacy

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

More Romance »

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

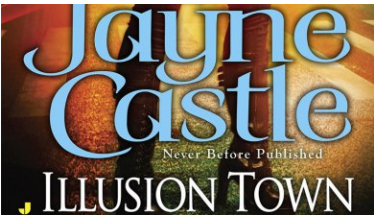
Cover Reveal: Lynn Cahoon's A Story To Kill

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

Exclusive Cover Reveal: Cari Z's Where

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

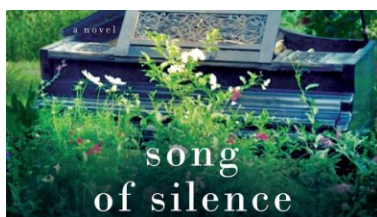
Cover Breakdown: Alessandra To Moonshot

More Young A

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 »](#)

[Advertising](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Subscription Services](#) | [RT Review Source](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

RT Book Reviews © 2009 - 2016. All rights reserved.