



The Lilac Bouquet

Carolyn Brown

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Come hell or high water, Emmy Jo Massey *will* have a wedding. After three generations of Massey women with children out of wedlock, she wants the whole town of Hickory, Texas, to witness the legitimacy of her union with Logan Grady. But dream weddings aren't cheap. So she accepts a highly lucrative stint as a home health assistant to retired realtor, and town recluse, Seth Thomas—a decision her great-grandmother Tandy is dead-set against.

Seth isn't happy about it, either. The eighty-two-year-old doesn't want a "babysitter"—much less a Massey—something he makes clear when Emmy arrives at his house, an empty mansion built for the woman who broke his heart. But as Emmy stays and the two eventually open up to each other, she learns the reason behind a feud between Seth, Tandy, and Logan's grandfather Jesse Grady that goes back six decades. She also uncovers a secret that forever changes how she sees her past and her future...

The Lilac Bouquet Details

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From Reader Review The Lilac Bouquet for online ebook

Pamela says

2.5 stars Overall, this was just ok for me. I didn't really connect with the characters. They were so full of spite and hateful to each other and their respective grandkids. And one was a preacher! Then, wham! - all is forgiven! This also has some holes in it with timeline and so on that I hope gets fixed before it is actually published.

****Thank you to the publisher and Net Galley in exchange of an honest review.****

Lis Carey says

With a family history that includes three generations of Massey women having children out of wedlock, Emmy Jo Massey is determined to have a big, formal wedding with as much as possible of the town of Hickory, Texas in attendance. Raising the money for the big wedding includes taking a two-month job as a home health aide to town recluse Seth Thomas.

Her great-grandmother, Tandy, is absolutely opposed. She wants the child she raised when her granddaughter died going nowhere near Seth Thomas. Of course, she's also dead set against Emmy Jo marrying Logan Grady, too, and that's not stopping Emmy Jo. But Tandy won't tell her why she's so opposed. The only answer she'll give is that she refuses to talk about the past--an answer that quite reasonably doesn't sway Emmy Jo to her point of view.

Logan's grandfather, Jesse, is equally opposed, and equally close-mouthed on why.

Nor is Seth Thomas any more willing to say why these three octogenarians hate each other so much. He'd refuse to have Emmy Jo in his house because of her kinship to Tandy if he could work out a way to do it, but with his broken hip still healing, his sister Nora has managed to take the decision out of his hands.

Gradually, Seth and Emmy Jo start to talk to each other.

Emmy Jo also starts digging into the town newspapers.

The cause of the feud amongst the three goes back more than sixty years, and the whole truth can't come out until each of the three starts talking. Seth, regarded by the entire town as weird and strange, turns out to be the one most willing to both listen and talk. Jesse, a preacher and most respected of the three in the town, is the least willing.

There were times when I thought, oh, this is just going to get unbearably foolish--but it didn't. This is a gentle but determined look at some interesting and complex characters who have a lot to answer for in their lives. It was a very satisfying read, or rather, listen.

Recommended.

I bought this audiobook.

Rachel K says

I've been reading some real mediocre books lately so I figured it would be better to venture out and read something with a little more substance.

I've read CB before and have enjoyed her books. They're well written with a decent story that I can lose myself in for a few hours after the kids have gone to bed :)

I wanted to rate this more than 3.5 stars but in all honesty, I couldn't get past one of the characters. Tandy (Emmy Jo's great grandmother) was a real bitch 60 odd years ago and she's still one now. I hated that Seth still had any feelings for her (whether they be friendship or more) after what she did to him, so it kind of ruined that part of the story for me.

Lucky, those relationships from long ago weren't what made the story for me.

I loved Seth! His poor mother went through so much and I HATED how she was treated. She didn't get a HEA which sucked because out of everyone even mentioned in this book, she was the one I felt deserved it. By extension, Seth was treated like shit too (yeah, I'm looking at you, Tandy!!) and I only wished he had more in his life than what he had. Still, he strikes up a friendship with the young Emmy Jo and later on with her fiancé, Logan. They were a great, young, much-in-love couple who acted with more maturity than their selfish, judgemental great-grandmother (Emmy Jo's) and grandfather (Logan's).

I would've loved to have seen Tandy and Jessie face some real consequences and be cut off from their family, but that could just be me being vindictive ;) But Seth was still his great self and Logan and Emmy Jo got their happy ending so I was mostly happy by the end.

But I like this author so I'm off to read some of her older stuff :)

Netgalley ARC

Sophia says

The age-old question of 'where do I come from?' is what drives this tale of a young woman determined to live-down her family heritage even as she seeks to discover it.

It was interesting to discover that this story has the distinction of being both an early work and a later work by the author so there is a feel of her early writing and also the maturity of her latest writing efforts.

I would also like to point out that regular fans of Carolyn Brown might go in expecting her usual light, fun down-home storytelling, but this is something of a different stripe. Oh, there's humor and that down-home comfy atmosphere, but it's laced with a bittersweet flavor caused by the echoes of the past weighing heavily on three families in the present.

This was small town showing both its best and its worse sides because it can be good community or

community turning on one of its own. This was also an interesting look at how much we as individuals find our identity through our family history. It's easy to take for granted when it's there and readily available, but for the heroine, half her past was blank for her and she was compelled to go looking.

The Lilac Bouquet is many things including a budding romance in the present and a tragic unrequited romance in the past, but it's also a story of healing and forgiveness and choices for the whole cast of characters.

I did adore Emmy Jo and Logan as characters, but I have to say that Old Seth and his painful past was the one that touched my heart. He truly had a tough row to hoe and really needed to catch a break.

This will be for those who want a small town comfy situation, a family saga type mystery, and a tender young love romance.

I rec'd this book on Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.

Millie says

Nobody does Women Fiction better than Carolyn Brown! The Lilac Bouquet just about killed me! I cried buckets! My heart hurt for Seth and Mary, Nora and Matthew went through. Her Women Fiction book especially The Wedding Pearls, The Lavender Sky and now The Lilac Bouquet make me so emotional and cry that I sometimes forget that this is the same author that made me snort ice tea when reading Wild Cowboy Ways, Darn Good Cowboy Christmas and The Red-hot Chili Cook Off. I finally got smart and now I don't eat or drink anything unless I put the book down first. I loved Seth and Emmy Jo! Tandy reminded me so much like my Grandmom. To see how Emmy Jo was able to slowly crack the shield around Seth Thomas's heart, slowly letting her in and letting go of the past was what kept me turning the pages. I read The Lilac Bouquet in about 36 hours. It is that good. LOVED IT!

Jami says

This was a solid, entertaining book. I enjoyed the feisty main character and it wasn't overly heavy on the romantic stuff. There was a little mystery to it (who was the grandfather? what was the source of the long-time feud?) and the supporting characters were also interesting. The narration was good and seemed to capture the personalities of the characters.

Heidi says

Five stars: An amazing tale of secrets, love, loss and living life to the fullest.

Tandy is furious at her great granddaughter Emmy Jo. Emmy Jo has gone and taken a job working for the reclusive Seth Thomas. There has been bad blood between Seth and Tandy for over sixty years. Emmy won't back down because she is determined to have her dream wedding, even if Tandy doesn't like her fiancé. Emmy will prove to the town once and for all that a Massey woman, after three generations of children born out of wedlock, can get it right. She just has to tame Seth, who doesn't want her in his house babysitting him

as he recovers from a broken hip. Once Emmy Jo starts her job, a funny thing happens. Long buried secrets come bubbling forth, and hearts change. Will Emmy Jo uncover the truth behind the long time feud? Can hearts change?

What I Loved:

*The Lilac Bouquet is a book that touched my heart, made me laugh and cry, and was an all around fantastic read. If you are a fan of Carolyn Brown, this book is different from her usual light and fluffy romantic tales. This one had sadness and loss, and it was rich and deep. I loved it! If you are a fan or a new reader, grab this one and settle in for a wonderful read.

*The story centers around Seth Thomas and Emmy Jo Massey. Seth comes across as gruff and eccentric, but once you peel back his layers and learn his secrets, he is a big old teddy bear. My heart hurt for Seth, and I loved him fiercely. I loved seeing him open his heart to Emmy Jo, and I cheered him on as he started his own bucket list. He stole my heart.

*Emmy Jo is a whirlwind. I loved her tenacity and her fierceness. She took on Seth and never backed down. It was so fun watching her get under his skin. I adored the relationship she formed with Seth. It was truly special! I couldn't help giggling as I watched Emmy battle her stubborn great grandma, Tandy. I could see where Emmy Jo got her fire.

*This is a book about long buried secrets and the pain of the past dragging down the living. It was heartbreaking to learn about the hardships Seth's beloved Mother endured. It was also eye opening to see how hard some women had to struggle and the lengths they had to go to take care of their family. Mary Thomas was a fighter, and I loved her bravery and her stubbornness. I only wish that she could have found some happiness.

*I enjoyed the take home message of this book. It is all about letting go of the past and learning to grab hold and live life to its fullest. It's never too late. Make your bucket list, get out and live.

*I can't recommend this book enough. It was a book that touched my heart and soul. I loved the characters, the struggles, the courage and the love. Read it!

And The Not So Much:

*I liked Tandy. She was feisty and funny, but I was disappointed that she remained so stubborn and that she refused to share the truth about the past. I was also frustrated with her because I didn't understand why she carried such hatred toward Seth all those years. She missed out by carrying a grudge for so long.

*I was disappointed in Jesse. I was hoping he would be a bigger man, and treat his great grandson better, but he remained small minded.

The Lilac Bouquet is a book that will land on my best of 2017 list. This was a story with heart and soul. It made me sad and it made me happy. This is a book that reminded me to grab hold of life and live it. I could go on and on, but I am not going to. Just take my word and read this book.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own, and I was not compensated for this review.

Posted@Rainy Day Ramblings.

Lisa Richards says

I always enjoy one of Brown's amazing cowboy romances but this was the first contemporary romance of

her's that I've read. She was as fabulous in this as in every other book of hers I've read. The humor and romance that you have come to expect from her stories are here along with a pretty good mystery. While I did miss the handsome cowboys, Logan was pretty darn outstanding. Wow, just goes to show that CB might be getting even better with age.

Nikki says

I honestly can't remember the last time I was so elated to get a book. As Carolyn Brown is one of my favorite authors, I couldn't believe my luck at getting the opportunity of reviewing an advanced copy of The Lilac Bouquet. Confession time- the first time I read through it, I forgot I was supposed to review it. I was so engrossed in the story, I just didn't look at from an "I need to do a write-up for this" aspect. So I waited a bit and reread it, and it was still so good, I got even more out of the subplots and the same problem arose. Then, I noticed that I still hadn't done my review with only days until the release. Again, I found the content so enjoyable, I made sure I had a purchased copy ready for release day so I could share a book I loved so much. TL;DR- I LOVE THIS BOOK!

My normal critiques usually include grammar, foul language, and who'd get my recommendations. Let's start with the easy stuff. Grammar gets an A; there's a few typos and some iffy spots, but it's not glaring, nor are there many. Foul language could potentially be a problem- mostly Biblical terms like hell and damn, no f-bombs or anything major. Recommendations are the easiest part. Anyone who loves a small-town family drama where actions of past generations affect today. There's love, mystery, history, and enough drama to go around. I'll be handing this to my mom on release day, and other friends and family can expect to see this book shortly thereafter. I'll probably even add it to my "read to grandma at the nursing home" pile. It's an impressive read.

Emmy Jo Massey is planning her wedding to Logan Grady. Not only is her dream wedding a huge affair, it will be the first one in years for her family. Her great-grandmother, Tandy, doesn't mind that Emmy Jo wants the big wedding; she just doesn't like the groom. Well, Tandy doesn't like the groom's grandfather. When Emmy Jo gets the opportunity to work a two-month stint as town recluse Seth Thomas for the equivalent of six month's pay, she jumps at the chance to make hers the most memorable wedding in town. Each for their own reasons, Tandy, Logan and even Seth don't approve of Emmy Jo's new job. And every time Emmy Jo thinks she's found the answer to one question, a million more pop up. The truth and the past eventually peel like an onion, but will Emmy Jo like the result? Better yet, how will the rest of the small town react when everything gets revealed?

I can't wait for this to be a movie! Think we could get Sam Elliot to play Seth?

I received a copy of The Lilac Bouquet by Carolyn Brown from *Montlake Romance* via **Netgalley** in exchange for an honest review.

Vickie says

What a sweet story! Small towns can be wonderfully supportive while at the same time cruel. The author does a great job showing both sides of Hickory. I also liked the characters: Tandy as a no-nonsense head of the family and her great-granddaughter Emmy Jo. My favorite character was Seth, an octogenarian who made something of himself against all odds.

I look forward to listening to more of Carolyn Brown.

Go Cards! L1C4!!

B. D. Mann says

With 77% of reviewers giving this offering 5 stars I was greatly disappointed in what I found. Having read nearly half of the book I simply could not continue. So-called Christian people who are bigoted, judgmental, unforgiving, and condescending seem to make up the bulk of a rather large cast of characters. The heroine, if you can call her that, demonstrates a complete disregard for Christian morality by secluding herself with her fiancé to play bedroom games as often as she can. Thankfully, the author refrained from describing these activities. If you elect to read this book I recommend making lots of side notes to keep track of who is who. I found this book to be boring with a capital B. Giving it two stars is being gracious.

C.J. Butcher says

Come hell or high water, Emmy Jo Massey will have a wedding. After three generations of Massey women with children out of wedlock, she wants the whole town of Hickory, Texas, to witness the legitimacy of her union with Logan Grady. But dream weddings aren't cheap. So she accepts a highly lucrative stint as a home health assistant to retired realtor, and town recluse, Seth Thomas—a decision her great-grandmother Tandy is dead-set against.

Seth isn't happy about it, either. The eighty-two-year-old doesn't want a "babysitter"—much less a Massey—something he makes clear when Emmy arrives at his house, an empty mansion built for the woman who broke his heart. But as Emmy stays and the two eventually open up to each other, she learns the reason behind a feud between Seth, Tandy, and Logan's grandfather Jesse Grady that goes back six decades. She also uncovers a secret that forever changes how she sees her past and her future...

I could read anything and everything by Carolyn Brown and be a happy person. I consume every book she comes out with so it's no surprise that I have 4 books sitting on my ARC shelves right now and I'm putting off everyone else's to get to hers. I absolutely want to be her best friend, I want to vacation with her and go shopping with her and ask her pointer tips for writing and before you think that's stalkerish....I'm just writing and a little bit is me being over-the-top! The part about me reading everything she writes, however, is NOT!!

Okay, to get down to business about this book – OH MY GOODNESS!! It was awesome and yes I'm partial

because I think she's an exceptional writer anyway so I wasn't coming to her work with brand-new eyes. I'll just say that I fell in love with Seth in this book from the first page he was in it. You wrote his name Carolyn and I loved him. He wasn't hard to love. Emmy Jo is a little different. She's a young woman who wants a BIG wedding. Not for the reason that you'd think, though. It's to show the whole town that she's really married and not just saying she's married. You see, people say she's from the wrong side of the track and her sweetheart Logan is the preacher's son. The story is about how Emmy Jo is taking care of another man at his mansion after he has surgery...enter Seth. Seth's a recluse, who's grumpy and Emmy Jo compares him to Sam Elliott – the actor. Now, I don't know about all of you but I love Sam Elliott and that just hit all my buttons for swoon-worthiness. I know you're thinking...Ewww, young girl and old guy who's like 82 years old. NO, NO, NO!! Emmy Jo's great grandmother knew him and unbeknownst to Emmy, she hates him so much that she threatens to kick Emmy out of the trailer she lives in if she even goes near the man. However, it's a lot of money for 2 months of work and she could pay for her dream wedding and she'll be leaving the trailer anyway. So Emmy packs her bags and heads for Seth's.

Seth's sister had arranged for his nurses and Seth not knowing it's Tandy's (Emmy GGM) granddaughter has a fit she's in his house. He's a little OCD, just as stubborn as mule and endearing. Logan, you'll also fall in love with. His great granddad, Jesse, went to school with Tandy and Seth. He's also a preacher like Logan and doesn't like Tandy or Emmy Jo because he doesn't approve of the marriage. He is so mad about the impending marriage that he takes it to the board of the church to have Logan kicked out of the upstairs apartment of the garage if he doesn't break up with Emmy Jo. Logan leaves not only his home but the church that he's always been in. He resigns his Sunday school class and says he'll go to Tandy's church. Only Tandy hates Logan as much as Jesse hates Emmy Jo. ANGST, ANGST, ANGST. Usually, I hate angst....everyone knows that but I am partial to the way that Carolyn writes it so I can't be impartial in my review of the angst part. Oh, I so loved this book!!

It wasn't just all drama and angst in this book because anyone that's ever read Carolyn Brown, knows that she's a hoot and so are her characters. Emmy Jo is a hilarious and she just made me love her the way she treated Seth. You find out all the reasons behind everything because Emmy Jo goes searching for answers...and BOY DOES SHE FIND ANSWERS Y'ALL!! My heart broke over the way Seth's mom was treated and how he spoke about her. I found myself crying and snorting all over the place. My family kept looking at me like I had 4 heads. I know my nose was the size of a kiwi by the time I got done rubbing it. I also found myself laughing out loud more times than I could count and wish I could smack Jesse in the same chapter...that is the test of a really good book! I'd love to meet a man like Seth...or Sam Elliott! I really think they should turn this book into a movie because it would be a hit. It kind of reminds me of the old-time movies that I used to watch when I was little. Seriously – Carolyn Brown if you ever read this review...Make this into a movie!! But really nothing is ever better than reading the book and taking the time to sit down and consume what the writer is trying to convey to her readers.

Sit down, get a cup of hot tea, some Kleenex and escape away from your family for a little while. Escape to the world that Carolyn Brown has created especially for you and enjoy it. It's an awesome place to be.

I was given a copy of this ARC from the publisher on NetGalley for an honest review. All of the above comments are my express opinions and no one else's.

Margie says

Every time I start to read a new Carolyn Brown Women's Fiction story I think that there is no way she could

ever outdo the previous story. Once again Carolyn Brown has proven me wrong. I just loved this book! I think it is now my absolute favorite! The author's characterization skills are phenomenal. She has the knack of being able to make her characters very realistic. No cookie-cutter characters here. They are not all sweet and full of fluff. No there are some mean ones, some very stubborn ones, some pathetically clueless ones, as well as strong and forthright ones. This just makes the conflict in the story that much more real, which, in turn, makes the resolution of the conflict that much more satisfying. The actions and emotions of the characters are so realistic the reader can't help but love, cringe over and yes even thoroughly dislike some.

The main question in this story is: "What caused the sixty-year-old feud between Seth Thomas, Tandy Massey and Jesse Grady?" Emmy Jo Massey, great-granddaughter of Tandy Massey decides to seek answers when she accepts a two month contract to be the personal assistant to Seth Thomas following his hip surgery. Everyone, including Logan Grady (grandson of Jesse Grady), Granny Tandy and Emmy's best friend, Diana wants Emmy to not accept the job. Emmy Jo though is very determined to do this as the pay is great and she needs the money to have a proper wedding with all the trimmings so the whole town knows for 100% sure that this later generation of Massey women will not be an unwed mother when the time comes to have children with Logan as were her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. So Emmy goes to work for Seth Thomas and starts getting clues to help solve the mystery of the great feud. A parallel story runs along with Emmy's as she unravels this mystery. She learns the true story behind the rumors about Seth's mother, Mary Thomas whose reputation according to town gossip was very tarnished.

This was a very emotional yet extremely satisfying read. Discovering the true story behind the feud and Mary Thomas' sad life experiences which affected her children as well as herself also kept me reading well past my bedtime. I think that everyone who reads this story with an open mind and is not looking for a cookie cutter cutsey story will come away from the experience with a great appreciation of the amazing talent of author Carolyn Brown.

KyBunnies says

I downloaded a copy of this book from NetGalley to review.

First, I hate the cover. Yes, it is nice but I expected more from Montlake Romance. To this reader, it looks like someone went and purchased a stock photo, threw on some text and that was it. The cover is generic and does not show any promise to a good story.

I should have taken my opinion of the cover and not wasted my time reading this book. I found problems with the story very early.

First problem. In location 729 it states the following at Location 729 . "*The doctor really wanted him to go to a physical therapy place for six weeks now that the staples were out.*". Okay great. The staples were out. Then at Location 789 readers see the following . "*She couldn't possibly support his weight, and if he fell and the staples broke loose, he could wind up back in the hospital.*". Then at location 2321 readers see the following . "*The doctor nodded. "Why don't you lie on the sofa here and let me take a look at the staples."*. So my question is when were the staples removed?

My second problem starts at Chapter 4. Really the first sentence in chapter 4. The first sentence is a total of 46 words. Really?!? 46 words to convey what the authors wanted readers to know. It makes me wonder why this extra, extremely long sentence could not have been written in two or three sentences. Don't take my

word for it. Here is the sentence: *‘Emmy Jo paced to the top of the staircase at the top of the wide upstairs hallway, back to her room and to the balcony, only to start all over again several times before she finally plopped down in the wing-back chair out in the hall.’* Little wordiness there?

This was a halfway clean story. No sex scenes and some cussing. At first, I honestly thought the author had intentionally left out all cussing. However, as readers get later into the story the author has characters throwing out lots of cuss words. If I had to give this book a rating it would be PG13.

I halfway liked this story but felt some of the characters got off very easy for the stuff they did. Yes, what happened was in the past but still, each and every one should have realized they screwed up and apologized, atoned and made amends for their sins.

Then I realize how fast everything happened in this story. How easy Seth was able to forgive everyone. After carrying 60+ years of hatred, bitterness, and anger for those who wronged him he just allowed everyone to walk away without anything but knowing his great-granddaughter.

I admit really disliked Jesse. To be someone who calls himself a man of God but cannot forgive others show he is not anything but a piece of scum. He acts like others show follow the ten commandments but he is allowed to pick and choose which ones he wants to follow. He is nothing but a hypocrite.

Then I have a problem with the age of some characters. Seth, Tandy, and Jesse are in their 80's. If Seth and Tandy slept together while in high school and had a child that would make them 17-19 years old. Okay then if that child also had a child early in life (which is implied in the book) these two characters would be in their early 40's. Then if that child (their grandchild) had a child early in life (which is implied also) that would make these two people in their early 60's. NOT in their early 80's unless we skipped a generation and again that is not implied in the book. It is stated often that Emmy Jo is Tandy's great-grandchild. No, it does not state her age but it is stated she is 21. So this reader would like to know why the author made Seth, Tandy, and Jesse so old. To this reader, something is wrong with the age of these characters.

I really wanted to like this story. The description fit the story but the writing did not live up to what I wanted. It just fell flat. Sorry but this book just did not do it for me.

Janet Rodman says

The Lilac Bouquet

By Carolyn Brown

The town of Hickory is rife with rumors and secrets that go back more than sixty years. The impact they have on the lives of the people living there, along with a love story, family feud, a new outlook on life and the discovery of long lost family form the basis of this story.

This story grabbed me within the first few pages. Emmy Jo is the central character in this story. She takes a job as an assistant to Seth Thomas, the town recluse to help pay for her wedding. Taking this job changed both their lives. We go through Emmy Jo's journey to find out what actually happened between Tandy, her great grandmother, Jesse Grady and Seth Thomas and what can be done to try to heal the rift between them. I couldn't put this book down. I never read the last chapter of a book, but I was so tempted to because I wanted to see how the story resolved itself. Carolyn Brown is a wonderful storyteller. You feel as if you actually know the people in the story. I laughed, cried, and felt the pain of the characters in this story. I especially loved the ending. I thoroughly enjoyed The Lilac Bouquet and highly recommend it. Looking for

a great read? This is your book. Bravo Ms Brown.
