



2013 Romantic Novel of the Year – The Shortlisted Books

RoNA Rose Award

Fiona Harper, *Always the Best Man*, Harlequin Mills & Boon Riva

Standing at the altar, Damien's breathless as the woman he loves walks towards him - to marry another man. Knowing bridesmaid Zoe is watching him makes it harder still. The opposite of the bride, Zoe is too loud, too vibrant, too everything! She can't resist provoking him. Just once she'd like to see Mr Perfect lose his cool. Before the wedding night is over Zoe will succeed in breaking Damien's iron-hard self-control. But their unexpected connection will threaten to undermine everything they believe about themselves and each other.

Sarah Mallory, *Beneath the Major's Scars*, Harlequin Historical

After being shamelessly seduced by a married man, Zelah finds her reputation in tatters. Determined to rise above the gossips, Zelah knows she can only rely on herself. But her independence takes a knock when a terrifying stranger comes to her aid. Major Dominic Coale's formidable manner is notorious, though Zelah shows no sign of fear. She doesn't cower at his touch as she begins to glimpse the man behind the scars.

Heidi Rice, *The Good, the Bad and the Wild*, Harlequin Mills & Boon Riva

Nick Delisantro is famous - for scripts, for his looks and above all for his ruthless bad-boy charm. Eva, on the other hand, has spent her life being an overlooked wallflower! Now she's got to meet the Mr Tall, Dark and Brooding or her only chance of promotion is over. Nick can't stop staring at the mysterious blushing girl who's dressed like a vixen but freezes under his gaze like a rabbit in the headlights. He can't wait to see what's behind the innocent front - but Nick is about to get far more than he's bargained for. Not only does Eva have the key to his secret past, but there's nothing more dangerously addictive than a good girl going wild.

Carol Townend, *Betrothed to the Barbarian*, Harlequin Historical

Princess Theodora of Constantinople is to marry Duke Nikolaos, the General-in-Chief of the army, a man chosen for her by the Emperor. An imperial princess must always do her duty - be beautiful, obedient and pure. But Theodora spent ten years in exile in a barbarian land. There, once, she might have forgotten protocol. Forgotten enough to have given birth to a baby in secret. As her wedding night approaches, Theodora finds she wants to share her bed with the Duke, except she knows she's on the verge of revealing her biggest sin.

Scarlet Wilson, *West Wing to Maternity Wing*, Harlequin Mills & Boon Medical

Famous neonatologist, Lincoln Adams, is looking after the President's newborn daughter when nurse Amy Carson arrives at the hospital posing as his very pregnant wife. Amy's had first-hand experience of Linc's skilful hands and he's the only person she trusts to look after her precious cargo, but trusting him with her fragile heart is another matter entirely.

Scarlet Wilson, *Her Christmas Eve Diamond*, Harlequin Mills & Boon Medical

Nurse Cassidy Rae is a stickler for rules, but even she revels in the magic of Christmas, unlike new registrar Brad Donovan, who hates Christmas. With his surfer-boy looks and cocky charm, he's severely testing Cassidy's goodwill to all men. But in the festive season miracles can happen, and Brad's about to give Cassidy a yuletide to remember.

Romantic Novel of the Year category finalists

(Alphabetical order by category and author)

Contemporary Romantic Novel

Katie Fforde, *Recipe for Love*, Arrow

When Zoe Harper wins a coveted place in a televised cookery competition she's thrilled. It's a chance to cook her way to fame and fortune and the little delicatessen she's set her heart on. But all too soon there's more than canapés, cupcakes and cordon bleu at stake. Will Zoe win the competition or is Gideon one temptation too far? Is Zoe prepared to risk all for love?

Veronica Henry, *The Long Weekend*, Orion

Clare Marlowe owns 'The Townhouse by the Sea' with Luca, the boutique hotel's charismatic chef. She ensures everything runs smoothly - until an unexpected arrival checks in and turns her world upside down. Affairs of the heart, secrets, lies and scandal are all wrapped up in one long, hot weekend.

Mhairi McFarlane, *You Had Me At Hello*, Avon

What happens when the one that got away comes back? Rachel and Ben, Ben and Rachel - together against the world until it fell apart. A decade later Rachel bumps into Ben one rainy night and the years melt away. They'd been partners in crime and the best of friends but life has moved on. Ben is married. Rachel is not. Yet in that split second of meeting Ben again, Rachel feels the old friendship return, and along with it the broken heart she's never been able to mend.

Monica McInerney, *The House of Memories*, Pan Macmillan

Following a tragic accident, Ella O'Hanlon flees to the other side of the world in an attempt to escape her grief, leaving behind the two people she blames for her loss: Aidan, the love of her life, and Jess, her half-sister. In London Ella is taken in by her beloved uncle Lucas, whose extraordinary house holds many wonderful memories for her. Lucas helps Ella to see that she is not the only one still hurting and that forgiveness can be the greatest healer in a family and marriage.

Sue Moorcroft, *Dream a Little Dream*, Choc Lit

What would you give to make your dreams come true? Liza Reece has a dream. Working as a reflexologist for a troubled holistic centre isn't enough, so when the opportunity arises to take over the Centre she jumps at it. The problem is she needs funds, and fast, as she's not the only one interested. Dominic Christy has dreams of his own. Diagnosed as suffering from a rare sleep disorder, dumped by his live-in girlfriend and discharged from the job he adored as an air traffic controller, he's single-minded in his aims. He has money, and plans for the Centre that don't include Liza and her team. But dreams have a way of shifting and changing and Dominic's growing fascination with Liza threatens to reshape his.

Polly Williams, *The Angel at No. 33*, Headline

One evening Sophie Brady kisses her husband, Ollie, and young son Freddie goodbye, closing the door on number thirty-three. At ten pm she's with her best friend Jenny, polishing off a second bottle of wine. By midnight, she's dead. Except that she doesn't feel dead. How can she leave the people she loves? Ollie is a man who once watered a houseplant for a year before realising it was plastic, Freddy

is so little, and Jenny? There's something she desperately needs to know before it's too late. Some love stories never end.

Epic Romantic Novel

Rowan Coleman, *Dearest Rose*, Arrow

When Rose Pritchard turns up on the doorstep of a Cumbrian B&B it is her last resort. She and her seven-year old daughter Maddie have left everything behind. They've come to the village of Millthwaite in search of the person who once offered Rose hope. Almost immediately Rose wonders if she's made a terrible mistake, if she's chasing a dream. But she knows in her heart that she can't go back. She's been given a second chance - at life and love - but will she have the courage to take it?

Dilly Court, *The Lady's Maid*, Arrow

In the quiet of a warm summer's evening, two young mothers are forced to give up their babies. Whilst Kate grows up knowing only poverty and servitude, Josie's world is one of privilege and luxury. Despite the differences in their circumstances, Kate and Josie have been friends since childhood. But their past binds them together in ways those closest to them are determined they must never know. Until a chance meeting forces Kate and Josie to confront the truth of that night nearly 20 years before - a truth that turns their world upside down and threatens to destroy their friendship forever.

Madeline Miller, *The Song of Achilles*, Bloomsbury

Greece in the age of heroes. Patroclus, an awkward young prince, has been exiled to the court of King Peleus and his perfect son Achilles. Despite their differences, Achilles befriends the shamed prince, and as they grow into young men skilled in the arts of war and medicine their bond blossoms into something deeper - despite the displeasure of Achilles's mother Thetis, a cruel sea goddess. When word comes that Helen of Sparta has been kidnapped, Achilles must go to war in distant Troy and fulfil his destiny. Torn between love and fear for his friend, Patroclus goes with him, little knowing that the years that follow will test everything they hold dear.

Kate Morton, *The Secret Keeper*, Pan Macmillan

1961: On a sweltering summer's day, while her family picnics by the stream on their Suffolk farm, sixteen-year old Laurel hides in her childhood tree house dreaming of a boy called Billy, a move to London and the bright future she can't wait to seize. But before the afternoon is over Laurel witnesses a shocking crime that changes everything.

2011: Now a much-loved actress, Laurel finds herself overwhelmed by shades of the past. Haunted by memories, and the mystery of what she saw that day, she returns to her home and begins to piece together a secret history. A spellbinding tale of mysteries and secrets, theatre and thievery, murder and enduring love.

Gill Paul, *Women and Children First*, Avon

The sinking of the Titanic leaves the lives of the survivors in turmoil: Reg, a handsome young steward who works in the first-class dining room; Annie, a gifted Irishwoman who is travelling to America with her four children; Juliette, a titled English lady who is pregnant and unmarried; an American millionaire and his wife, trapped in a poisoned marriage; and a mystery passenger who never shows her face in public.

Liz Trenow, *The Last Telegram*, Avon

The war changes everything for Lily Verner. As the Nazis storm Europe, Lily becomes an apprentice at her family's silk weaving factory. When they start to weave parachute silk there is no margin for error; one tiny fault could result in certain death for Allied soldiers. The war also brings Stefan to Lily; a German Jewish refugee who works on the looms. As their love grows, there are suspicions that someone is tampering with the silk. Can their love survive? Will the Verner's silk stand the ultimate test?

Historical Romantic Novel

Charlotte Betts, *The Apothecary's Daughter*, Piatkus (Little Brown)

1665: Susannah Leyton has grown up behind the counter of her father's apothecary shop in bustling Fleet Street. More learned than any apprentice, she concocts soothing medicines and ointments with great skill. Content with her life, Susannah is dealt a shocking blow when her widowed father marries again, and her new stepmother is determined to remove her from the apothecary for good. A proposal of marriage from the charming Henry Savage seems to offer her an escape and she resolves to be a good wife to him. But as the plague sweeps through London, tragedy strikes, and dark secrets in her husband's past begin to unfold. It will take all of Susanna's courage and passion to save herself from tragedy.

Christina Courtenay, *The Silent Touch of Shadows*, Choc Lit

Professional genealogist Melissa Grantham receives an invitation to visit her family's ancestral home, Ashleigh Manor. From the moment she arrives, life-like dreams and visions haunt her. The spiritual connection to a medieval young woman and her forbidden lover cause her to question her sanity, but Melissa is determined to solve the mystery. Jake Precy, owner of a nearby cottage, also has disturbing dreams, but it's not until he meets Melissa that they begin to make sense. When he hires Melissa to research his family's history, he is unaware that their lives are already entwined. Is the mutual attraction real or the result of ghostly interference?

Kate Furnivall, *The White Pearl*, Sphere (Little Brown)

Malaya, 1941: Connie Thornton plays her role as a dutiful wife and mother without complaint even though she feels she's oppressed, crippled by boredom and in a loveless marriage. When the Japanese invade, Connie, her family and friends flee south on their boat, *The White Pearl*, towards Singapore. En route they learn that Singapore is already under siege - tensions mount and tempers flare. When a fighter plane crashes into the sea, they rescue its Japanese pilot and for Connie, that's when everything changes. In the suffocating confines of the boat with her life upended, Connie discovers a new kind of freedom and a new, dangerous, exhilarating love.

Pamela Hartshorne, *Time's Echo*, Pan Macmillan

York, 1577: Hawise Aske smiles at a stranger in the market and sets in train a story of obsession and sibling jealousy, of love and hate and warped desire. Drowned as a witch, Hawise pays a high price for that smile, but for a girl like her in Elizabethan York, there is nowhere to go and nowhere to hide. Four and a half centuries later, the much-travelled Grace Trewe arrives in York to settle the affairs of her late godmother. Grace has barely entered her dead godmother's house before she hears someone whisper "Bess". She is drawn inexorably into Hawise's life, tumbling back in time to become the young Elizabethan woman. Grace finds that this time she cannot move on as she always has before. Will she be engulfed in the power of the past?

Susanna Kearsley, *The Rose Garden*, Allison & Busby

When Eva's film star sister Katrina dies, she leaves California and returns to Cornwall, where they spent their childhood summers, to scatter Katrina's ashes and return her to the place where she belongs. But Eva must also confront the ghosts from her own past as well as those from a time long before her own. For the house where she so often stayed as a child is home not only to her old friends the Halletts, but also to people who had lived there in the eighteenth century. When Eva finally accepts that she is able to slip between centuries and see and talk to the inhabitants from hundreds of years ago, she soon finds herself falling for Daniel Butler - a man who lived - and died - long before she herself was born. Eva realises that she too must decide where she really belongs, in the life she knows or the past she feels so drawn towards.

Mary Nichols, *The Kirilov Star*, Allison & Busby

November 1920: Russia may have endured the Revolution, but a brutal civil war still rages. Brothers are pitted against each other in battle, thousands flee as the threat draws ever closer. As distant relatives of the Romanovs, the Kirilov family is never far from suspicion and closer to danger than

most. When tragedy strikes, four-year old Lydia Kirilova is separated from her family. The only key to her identity is the opulent jewel concealed in her petticoat. Struck by the child's plight, benevolent diplomat Sir Edward Stonleigh brings her to England, where she grows up well educated, wealthy and surrounded by a loving family. It is not enough. Unable even to recall her own birth date, Lydia yearns to know the truth about her heritage. The charming Nikolay Andropov offers her the perfect opportunity to do so. Invited to join him on a trip to Russia, Lydia jumps at the chance to discover more about the past she's finding increasingly difficult to remember. But when reality sets in, is all as it seems? With the Second World War looming, Lydia's situation becomes desperate. Will she ever find a place to finally think of as home?

Romantic Comedy Novel

Jenny Colgan, *Welcome to Rosie Hopkin's Sweetshop of Dreams*, Sphere (Little Brown)

Rosie Hopkins thinks leaving her busy London life, and her boyfriend Gerard, to sort out her elderly Aunt Lilian's sweetshop in a small country village is going to be dull. How wrong could she have been? Lilian Hopkins has spent her life running Lipton's sweetshop, through wartime and family feuds. As she struggles with the idea that it might finally be time to settle up, she also wrestles with the secret history hidden behind the jars of beautifully coloured sweets.

Victoria Connelly, *The Runaway Actress*, Avon

When the stresses of being an A-list actress become too much, Connie Gordon decides to escape to a tiny Scottish village. Accepting an invitation from her fan club in Scotland, Connie kisses goodbye to her ex-boyfriends, stalkers, double-crossing agents and prepares herself for complete relaxation. But swapping the Hollywood Hills for the Highlands of Scotland doesn't make for the easiest of transitions, and when she meets the local playwright, Alastair McInnes, who's sworn he'll never become involved with another actress again, sparks fly.

Jane Costello, *All the Single Ladies*, Simon & Schuster UK

Samantha Brooks' boyfriend has made a mistake - one everyone knows he'll live to regret. Out of the blue Jamie, the love of her life, has announced he's leaving. Gorgeous, loving, intelligent, he's perfect for Sam in every way but one - he's a free spirit. After six years in one place, doing a job he despises, he's compelled to do something that will destroy his relationship with Sam; book a one-way flight to South America. But Sam isn't giving up without a fight. Realising Jamie is torn between staying and going, Sam hatches a plan to make him realise just what he's giving up. The plan involves dirty tricks, plotting and a single aim - to win him back. But by the time Jamie wakes up to what he's losing, a gorgeous new pretender has entered Sam's life. Does she still want Jamie back?

Nicola Doherty, *The Out of Office Girl*, Headline

Alice Roberts is having a rubbish summer. She's terrified of her boss, her career is stalling and she's just been dumped by text message. Then her boss, Olivia, is taken ill, and Alice is sent on the work trip of a lifetime - to a villa in Sicily to edit the autobiography of Hollywood bad boy Luther Carson. But it isn't all yachts, nightclubs and Camparis. Luther's arrogant agent Sam wants him to ditch the book. Luther himself is gorgeous, charming and impossible to read. There seems to be only one way to get his attention, and it definitely involves mixing business with pleasure. Alice is out of the office, and in deep trouble.

Belinda Jones, *Winter Wonderland*, Hodder & Stoughton

Travel journalist Krista feels that she's woken up in a snow globe when she arrives in magical Quebec to report on Canada's glittering Winter Carnival. Over ten sub-zero days Krista's formerly frozen heart begins to melt as she discovers an enchanting world of ice palaces, husky dog sledding and maple syrup treats galore. And then she meets Jacques, a man as handsome and rugged as he is mysterious. The two share a secret that could bond them forever, but can they find a way to break through the protective layers around their hearts to warm up this winter wonderland?

Jane Wenham-Jones, *Prime Time*, Accent Press

Laura Meredith never imagined herself appearing on TV; she's too old, too flabby, too downright hormonal, and much too busy holding things together for her son, Stanley, after her husband left her for a younger, thinner replacement. Best friend Charlotte is a determined woman and when Laura is persuaded to go on to a daytime talk show to talk about her PMT, everything changes. Suddenly there's a camera crew tracking her every move and Laura finds herself an unlikely star. As things hot up between her and the gorgeous TV director, Cal, everything else is going downhill. While Laura is caught up in a heady whirlwind of beauty treatments, makeovers and glamorous film locations, Charlotte's husband, Roger, is concealing a guilty secret, Stanley's got problems at school, work is piling up, and when Laura turns detective to protect Charlotte's marriage, things go horribly wrong.

Young Adult Romantic Novel

Jo Cotterill, *Sweet Hearts: Model Behaviour*, Red Fox (RHCP)

Lola Cassidy has it all: wealthy parents, a gorgeous boyfriend and the daughter of a Bollywood producer as her best friend. She's going to be a model, like her mother, and is looking forward to work experience at a famous fashion house. But things don't go to plan, and when her place in designer heaven falls through she ends up having to work in an animal sanctuary. Can Harry, as mysterious as he is good-looking, help her enjoy her new situation?

Laura Jarratt, *Skin Deep*, *Electric Monkey*/Egmont

Ugly people don't have feelings. They're not like everyone else. They don't notice if you stare at them and turn away, and if they did notice it wouldn't hurt them. They're not like real people. That's what Jenna used to think before she had a car crash that left her best friend dead and Jenna permanently scarred. She struggles to rebuild her life but every stare in the street, every time she looks in the mirror she wants to retreat further from the world. Until she meets Ryan.

Ryan is a traveller and when he and his mother moor their narrow boat on the outskirts of a village, she tells him it will be different this time. He doesn't believe her; he can't imagine why this place shouldn't be as unwelcoming as the rest. Until he meets Jenna. As Jenna and Ryan grow closer, repercussions from the crash continue to reverberate through the community. And then a body is found ...

Marie-Louise Jensen, *The Girl in the Mask*, OUP

Fifteen-year old Sophia is trapped by the limitations of living in a man's world in Georgian England. Forced by her father to give up everything she loves, Sophia is ordered to make a new life in Bath. By day, she is trapped in a social whirl of balls and masquerades. By night, she secretly swaps her ball gowns for breeches, and turns to highway robbery to get her revenge. When one man begins to take a keen interest in her, Sophia must keep her distance, or risk unmasking her secret life.

Victoria Lamb, *Witchstruck*, *Corgi* (RHCP)

Meg Lytton has always known of her dark and powerful gift. Raised a witch from early childhood, concocting spells from herbs and bones is as natural to Meg as breathing. But there has never been a more dangerous time to practise the craft, for it is 1554, and the punishment for any woman branded a witch is death. Sent to the isolated palace of Woodstock, Meg discovers her magic is of interest to the banished princess, who is desperate to know if she will ever claim the throne. Meg's existence becomes more dangerous every day, with the constant threat of witch finder Marcus Dent, and the arrival of a smouldering, young Spanish priest, Alejandro de Castillo, to whom she is irresistibly drawn.

Sarra Manning, *Adorkable*, *Atom* (Little Brown)

Jeane Smith is a blogger, a dreamer, a dare-to-dreamer, jumble sale queen, CEO of her own lifestyle brand and has half a million followers on Twitter. Michael Lee is a star of school, stage and playing field - a golden boy in a Jack Wills hoodie. They have nothing in common but a pair of cheating exes. So why can't they stop snogging?

Susan Waggoner, *Neptune's Tears*, Piccadilly Press

It is 2218 and Zee McAdams is in her second year as a healing empath at a busy London hospital. When a mysterious young man arrives for treatment, Zee's hard-won calm is shaken. She will need all her courage if she's to follow her heart; especially when David reveals a devastating secret.