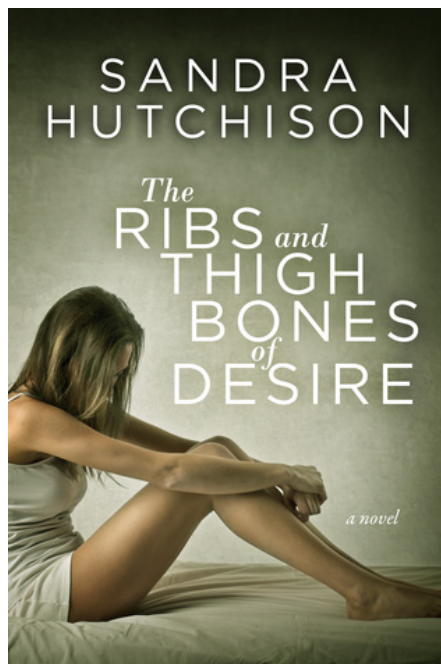




The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire

Sandra Hutchison

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The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire Sandra Hutchison

It's the summer of 1977 in a small town in Western Massachusetts. Physics professor David Asken has just lost his young family in a plane crash he somehow survived. Sixteen-year-old neighbor Molly Carmichael used to be the babysitter, but now will be keeping house for him while he recuperates. He's quietly planning to end his life just as soon as he can drive again, but may not be willing to wait that long after he comes across his dead wife's journal and encounters more hostility than he had ever imagined. Molly is trying to cope with being known as Tampon Girl, thanks to a sculpture by her notorious artist mother, but she will have to deal with much worse than that after a drunken teenage party.

Both man and girl are going to have to grow up the hard way, and it's their unexpected connection — fraught with potential scandal — that may just help them do it. This provocative coming-of-age novel asks: Is there ever a time when doing the wrong thing might be exactly right?

This is the second book from Sandra Hutchison's, whose debut novel *THE AWFUL MESS: A LOVE STORY*, an Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award semifinalist, has been downloaded by over 55,000 readers.

The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire Details

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Author : Sandra Hutchison

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From Reader Review The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire for online ebook

Patricia says

This book was emotional, disturbing and effected me deeply. It was more than I had expected. There were no funny moments. A professor survived a fiery plane crash, but his wife and little girl did not. He is racked with guilt and becomes suicidal. His child's teenaged babysitter takes on the job as his housekeeper while he recovers. The teen has problems, too, including surprises about her eccentric mother's sexuality and curiosity about her own. Chapters alternate between the teen's and the professor's points of view. The book is set in the late seventies and it well-written. I couldn't put it down, and will never forget it. That does not mean that I enjoyed it.

gabbie valles says

I started this book during a "reading slump" and to be very honest it has brought back my desire to read regularly. I am very pleased with the storyline and how Hutchison used every character in the ways that she did. The ending was left open but I'm not necessarily mad at it. If there was a second to this book I'd love to read it immediately. Thanks Sandra Hutchison for a novel that could be very difficult for some to swallow, but written in a way that can easily make the reader understanding of the situations.

Jinnie says

Wow.

This is not the second book I expected from this author. Her first book was a romance and THIS was not THAT. Her first book had much levity, and an irreverent air to it. This book did not indulge in anything as mundane as irreverence. Her first book wrapped up tidily. This book ended in full-throttle ambiguity.

But by all means, do not let my proceeding paragraph dissuade you from reading this book! Just make sure you have a minimum of two days to devote to nothing but reading because like everything I've read by Hutchison, once you start reading you cannot put it down. Hutchison has a way of mixing word and story into her very own heady cocktail that you can't stop ingesting, and is sure to leave your head spinning. (What was IN that drink?)

The weight of this book is dense indeed. I won't put any specific spoilers in, however I will say that while the story and writing are compelling, it's not exactly comfortable reading. The story is messy, but messy in a way that mirrors real life. This book will challenge readers morally and ethically. It wrestles with, among other things: human sexuality; tensions between familial autonomy and communal interactions; sexual freedoms and/or abuses; and artistic freedoms and/or abuses. This is not a book for the faint-hearted. It is absolutely a book for people with hearts big enough to allow for the breadth and depth of the human condition.

The book got points off for a few historical inaccuracies (i.e., set in 1977, references a mall that didn't open until 1979, mentions boomboxes which didn't come into existence until the 1980s). These inaccuracies don't

affect the story. They jumped out at me since I grew up in the area where the book is set, and I'm roughly contemporary to the teen protagonist.

One of the things I value about this author is that she includes discussion questions at the end of her books. This book would make an excellent book club read; all the more-so for those thoughtful and thought-provoking questions provided at the end.

Serena.. Sery-ously? says

3.5/4*

{Io con questo libro ho finalmente scoperto cosa "Indie" volesse dire.

No, non 'roba alternativa di autori che vivono probabilmente in una comune' ma pubblicato in modo indipendente. Ci siamo, dai!}

La prima parte mi è piaciuta moltissimo ed ero pronta a dargli cinque stelline.. Poi però la cosa un po' si perde e il romanzo diventa goffo, mostrando spesso le sue debolezze da opera prima.

Io credo che Sandra Hutchinson abbia pensato a tanto bel materiale e lo abbia portato avanti fino ad un certo punto, perdendo però coraggio e lasciando le cose un po' abbandonate a se stesse, senza imprimere alla storia il giusto mordente. Il lettore arriva alla fine un po' scoraggiato e 'deluso' perché CAVOLO! Io mi aspettavo davvero mari e monti, diciamocelo!

Non ho ben capito la scelta di ambientare il romanzo negli anni '70 perché credevo servisse a dare background utile alla storia.. Diciamo che se non fosse stato scritto sulla quarta di copertina, non so se ci avrei fatto caso!!

Parecchi personaggi sono un po' costruiti con l'accetta e alcune figure sono davvero poco credibili, come ad esempio i poliziotti, tutti brutti, cattivi, corrotti fino al midollo e pronti a fare del male ad una ragazzina di 16 anni.. Però Molly è un personaggio credibile e fa tanta tenerezza.. Mentre Cassandra è il top!! :D

Comunque a parte qualche scivolone, io il libro lo consiglio.. E magari leggerò presto un altro romanzo della Hutchinson!

Michele says

I received a copy from the author via Shelf Awareness in order to review.

As I glanced through other reviews, someone mentioned "funny". I don't think I found much in this book that I consider funny. All the characters are tortured in some way. Molly, the sixteen year old with an artist mother whose art embarrasses her, is tasked with the job of caring for her neighbor after his family is killed in a plane crash.

The description of this book is a bit heavy on a sexual relationship between the Molly and her neighbor, Dr. Asken. I feel this is a disservice to the book and author since this may cause people to avoid reading it. The story is (to me) more than that: it is how each of these characters become involved in each others' lives.

The unusual title, taken from a work by Virginia Woolf, makes perfect sense by the end of the book. The characters are well developed and draw you into the story.

Mary Maddox says

A coming-of-age novel set in America in the late 70s, Sandra Hutchison's *The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire* centers on the relationship between David, a physics professor in his 30s, and Molly, the teenage girl who used to babysit his daughter. Molly doesn't babysit for David anymore because his wife and daughter recently perished in a plane crash. He is too overwhelmed by grief to take care of himself, so his estranged sister hires Molly to keep house for him.

Molly has problems of her own. Her parents are divorced. Her father loves her but now has another wife and children, a family where she has a marginal place. She mostly lives with her mother, a notorious and uninhibited artist who commemorates Molly's first period by constructing the figure of a girl with tampons and, of course, exhibiting it publicly. Molly's schoolmates call her Tampon Girl.

The physics professor doesn't seduce or become obsessed with the teenager, nor does she have a girlish crush on him. While David struggles with grief and survivor's guilt and Molly negotiates the minefield of adolescence in the 70s, they develop a friendship that's hard to categorize but easy for people in their small town to misinterpret and condemn.

Sandra Hutchison writes beautifully transparent and unpretentious prose. She creates complex characters and a vivid sense of place. Most of all, she tells a compelling story full of sorrow and humor with a benign detachment that leaves room for readers to draw their own conclusions. In other words, she's a first-rate writer.

Some readers might be offended by Hutchison's frank depiction of sexual situations and nonjudgmental treatment of behavior that is usually condemned. They may dislike the somewhat open ending. But if you don't read fiction to find emotional security and have your beliefs validated, if you're just looking for an excellent book, I strongly recommend *The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire*.

Courtney says

This book ended up totally not being what I expected, but that being said, I did really enjoy. The story goes back and forth between 17 year Molly who has a humiliating mother and 33 year old David Asken who is a professor who just lost his wife and young daughter in a car accident. Molly was David's child's babysitter, and when his family perishes, she essentially becomes his babysitter. I completely forgot throughout the book (until the mention of a cassette player) that this took place in 1977, but rumors fly when Molly and David are seen spending so much time together. Throw in a careless best friend (Kim) and her brutish family, and disaster is sure to strike.

Molly and David teach other many things, and this book is more of a coming-of-age tale for Molly with some laughter, craziness, tears, and heartache thrown in along the way.

Piepie says

You have to read this book... it's fantastic. A coming of age story for a high schooler wise and mature beyond her years and finally, by the end, able to find her own voice, take a stand for herself, and look ahead to her

future shining bright before her.

Molly is a plain and unobtrusive teen, overshadowed by her talented mother's artwork. Molly babysits for their neighbors, David and Elaine's little girl Emily, but when Elaine and Emily are killed in an accident, Molly is hired to be David's housekeeper.

I loved the "will they or won't they", so cleverly interwoven throughout this story. I found it hard to put this book down, and just kept on reading and reading. And I don't even know how to classify it- it probably doesn't belong on my "happy endings" shelf, nor does it belong on my "suspense/thriller" shelf. But there is suspense. This story will hook you. You will wish nothing but good things for Molly, and admire the courage and strength that she finds by the end of the book.

MichellemyBelle says

I'm a little OK with missing most of the 70's

I knew nothing of this book or the author when I decided to read it. I gravitated toward the title like one usually does to an amazing cover, the title was familiar, edgy, and as I read the book I realised why. David loses his family in a plane crash! Wow, just like that right in the beginning - huge tragedy. This author isn't done toying with our emotions. The shock factor stays on an orange alert throughout the whole story. There are some pretty rotten, messed up people in this book...heck the whole town is warped. It appears that the only non-deviant characters are the two main characters: David and Molly. Is it something about the setting being in the 70's? I just don't get it, but if the author had a laundry list of tragedy and sexual deviant behavior to include, she made it. Got it all in there! Over the top? A little. Talk about no subtlety.

I'm not being too harsh, I really liked Molly. Her relationship with her widowed friend despite the taboo nature was the most redeeming part of this book. Very well done. I appreciate how she came of age despite all the crazy, unlikely land mines that came her way. I would have been content with one or two less landmines. It certainly would not have lessened this already gripping piece of literary fiction. 3.5 stars.

Vivian Muia says

This is one of the realest books I have ever read. The pain, the characters, the story itself are so real it hurts. And it does hurt, because this isn't a tale about simply finding love. It's a tragic story about making a choice out of bad options.

At first, I thought the character of Cassandra was a little unrealistic. But I concede that there are some people --- some parents --- in the world like her.

The worst thing about this book was the language. Whereas it, too, was mostly --- and painfully --- real, I very much disliked the references to rape. It's not unrealistic to call it rape, but the author, for whatever reason, used the f-word and a d-word instead of the four-letter word it really is, thus lessening its violence and abusiveness.

I don't understand the reviewers who said this book is boring and difficult to get into. I couldn't put it down.

I received this book free from Awesome Indies Books in return for an honest review.

Tabitha Vohn says

Love is a slow burn for Molly & David in this enthralling, realistic portrait of choices in a time of change. It explores complex issues such as grief, sexual abuse, and the turmoil of wanting someone you're not supposed to have. Also, it presents the reader with a profound look at the parent/child relationship in (albeit) extreme situations, ones which the average reader can readily sympathize (if not identify) with.

There's a lot to love about this novel but, without inundating you with spoilers, let me tell you that its authenticity and raw honesty make it an amazing read. I'm usually skeptical reading stories that are meant to be set in this decade or that decade. Let's be honest, if I want to feel as though I'm in the beloved 80's, I'm going for a John Hughes film, not *The Goldbergs* on ABC (love you though, *Goldbergs*!) I was expecting the 70's backdrop of the novel to feel inauthentic, but the author captures the essence of the decade well, and seamlessly blends it with the controversial topics that the book explores and in which the time period plays a vital role. At some moments I was infuriated and ready to go brush off my old feminist texts and organize new "after dark" campaigns (sadly, I walk around my neighborhood with pepper spray in hand, and my town is not seething with nearly as many seedy elements as Molly's!). Other moments really captured the beauty of the self-expression and experimentation of the era, although these moments were usually laced with controversy themselves, and I loved that the author emphasized the reality of consequences attached to every choice, especially selfish ones. I appreciated that message.

The raw honesty of the characters, of their relationships, and of the choices that they make is a defining element as well. I grew to either passionately love or vehemently hate the characters, and that's the mark of a great novel: making the reader feel. Hutchison doesn't pull any punches either. She wins your heart with Molly then puts her through absolute hell (that's all I'll say). But I was right there with her. I appreciated how Hutchison brought understanding to the characters that merited it, and left the others in the vague shadows and moldy rocks they climbed out from under.

I can't wrap up this review without commenting on David & Molly either. I myself have always had a weak spot for autumn/spring relationships (I blame Stallone; long story). But, the infatuation with older men...I get that. It's a motif I explore often in my own writing. Hutchison takes an original approach in the novel, and there is a surprisingly refreshing amount of time spent developing that relationship outside of "between the sheets". Again, in a word, refreshing.

My only criticism is that for a story that approaches relationships with such a slow build, the ending ultimately felt rushed. But hey, that could have been my own disappointment that the novel was over, and I didn't want to leave the company of the characters just yet.

I freaking loved this novel (if you can't tell). If unique, literary, unconventional relationship stories about family, life, and love are your thing, read this novel!

Nandini says

Funny, dark, and utterly brilliant: this UNromance is a most original coming-of-age story

It's the 1970s in suburban America and the stage is set for the sort of story that, in a lesser writer's hands, would usually make me fling my e-reader across the room. David is a 30-something physics professor

traumatized by the recent loss of his wife and daughter in a plane crash. Molly is his 16-yr-old babysitter set on a collision course with a world far less innocent than she imagines.

But this is no seedy romance - the book is much too feminist for that. Right from the beginning, Ms. Hutchison's trademark unflinching realism grounds us solidly in characters closely observed and fully realized, which means, among other things, that any romance or lack thereof is far from a foregone conclusion.

(We are kept in complete suspense about whether they will ever get together. At various points in the book I was either rooting for them to get it on already or convinced that it was hilariously impossible for them to ever do it. Will they, or won't they? The book kept me guessing and ended up surprising me. It's the most original UNromance that I've ever read.)

Both David and Molly come of age in this book, and we end up rooting for both of them because of how real they are to us. Molly, to give one example, is a very mature and emotionally intelligent young woman, but she also keeps reminding us in little ways that she's indubitably a teenager, with sudden fits of deadly sarcasm, spite, cocky judgement, or endearing cluelessness. David's depression, to give another example, never resembles pathos... instead he's exactly like that guy we all know who turned into a zombie for a couple of weeks and then into an asshole for a few weeks more, until he found his way back to semi-normalcy, flailing and floundering in hilarious ways.

The supporting cast SLAYED me. Cassandra, Molly's mother, is one of my favorite characters ever: she's the feminist mother I want to be (well, barring the awful sculptures, I guess) and I could write pages about all the things I love about her. She's the only person around Molly who's fully an adult, and fully respects Molly's autonomy as a young woman. I admired the heck out of her. Her boyfriend Colin is one of the comic highlights of the book. The Thanksgiving scene left me in stitches.

I am a fan of Sandra Hutchison's first novel, *The Awful Mess: A Love Story*. (It was one of five semi-finalists in the Amazon Breakthrough Novel Awards general fiction category.) I used to be in a writer's group with Sandy many years ago, and I've followed her work ever since. She's one of those writers you can always bank on turning out a great read. And with this book I think she establishes herself as not only technically great but a deeply courageous writer, too. It takes guts to write this kind of story and mastery to pull it off so successfully.

Dawn Combs says

A truly great surprise!

I know its a good book when I can't put it down. The perfect mix of tragedy, personality, and all the other elements of a good story. This author has talent. Ilk be looking for more of her work.

Bella says

[taboo love, incest and rape. (hide spoiler)]

S.M. Freedman says

This was a fantastic read from start to finish. The characters were completely real and compelling, their circumstances so tragic, so real, so heart-wrenching. Ms. Hutchison tackles complex characters and stories with a beautiful simplicity. It's rare that a story captivates me so deeply, but David and especially Molly will live with me forever.

Why no voting buttons? We don't let customers vote on their own reviews, so the voting buttons appear only when you look at reviews submitted by others.

Julie Failla Earhart says

I have to admit that I didn't pay much attention to the title of this book when I entered the Shelf Awareness newsletter contest; I was more captivated with the story and the cover. I kinda cringed when it arrived in the mail; seemed a little too much erotica for me. But, luckily, the story lived up to, and exceeded my expectations.

The story opens with David Asken and his family returning from their family vacation at Walt Disney World. David hates to fly, that obvious with the first sentence: "What was the point of being married, David wondered, if he couldn't at least have a little company while he was pretending not to be terrified?" They are flying through a thunderstorm. Suddenly the "engines roared and the plane lifted steeply up again...the plane suddenly lurched left." I was hooked and settled into my chair for a wonderful read.

Chapter Two start with David's family's---wife, Elaine, and daughter, Emily---memorial service. How he escaped, he has no idea. All he knows is that he will never be the same, physically, emotionally, and mentally.

David has been relying on his sister while he was in the hospital. Now that he's out, he depends a lot on Emily's babysitter, sixteen-year-old Molly. She has become, basically, his housekeeper.

Molly has her own horrors to survive. Her mother, a celebrated artist, created a work to memorialize Molly's puberty. It's a statue made of tampons, logically called Tampon Girl. The mocking is so bad, she's forced to change schools. Plus her mother is known to have a different man at the house every weekend when Molly goes to her father's. As the two try to cope with what life has thrown at them, it's not easy for either.

The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire is an honest look at grief and coming to grips with their new normal. At first Molly is David's caretaker and lifeline. But as the story progresses, David becomes Molly's caretaker and lifeline. In the coming-of-age novel, both protagonists must learn life's lessons the hard way.

I thoroughly enjoyed this, Hutchison's second novel. While the premise of the novel does become sexual, it's not gratuitous. The plot never disappointed. I give The Rib and Thigh Bones of Desire five out of five stars...Hutchison is my new favorite author.

James Williams says

Excellent and Moving

One of the more challenging objectives a writer faces is developing characters who are genuine while still managing to use them to convey to readers some of the eternal verities of the human experience. Hutchison delivers in spades with this book. The main characters are drawn in such fine detail that I felt as though I knew them. At times, they made me laugh; at times, they made me so frustrated—especially David—that I

wanted to slap them silly for being such idiots . . .in other words, so human. In the crucial scene involving Molly, I had to put the story down for a couple of days to prepare myself emotionally for what I knew was coming. Kudos to Ms. Hutchison for writing this wonderful book.

Mark Smith says

Interesting treatment of a delicate subject

Warning:subject matters maybe too much for some readers.spoiler warning:after a traumatic event separate s David from his pregnant wife and young daughter,he has to try to navigate Hus way back with the help of his next door neighbor molly,who used to babysit his daughter....

Al says

The reasons people read fiction and what they expect or hope to get from the experience varies, not only from reader to reader, but sometimes from book to book. For some, it is purely entertainment or vicarious experience of some kind. Others want something deeper whether it be a message, a thought-provoking story, or a trigger to consider the world and their place in it. A good story will work on both levels, entertaining all readers while providing grist for the mill to those who are looking for something deeper.

The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire has the entertainment part down with a coming of age story set in the late 70s. If that's your era, you might find it evokes a few nostalgic feelings, but regardless of age, if you've ever been a teenager you'll relate to the struggles of that time in life.

However, odds are if you're a reader who prefers to be entertained by the surface story, that you'll find yourself dragged deeper against your wishes. Depending on your thoughts, beliefs, and opinions on some subjects, the direction the story takes may anger you or challenge your beliefs. Thought provoking might be too mild a term as you're forced to ponder many things including the reasonableness of social norms, whether artistic expression should have limits, and parental responsibility.

****Originally written for "Books and Pals" book blog. May have received a free review copy. ****

sue says

I read the The Awful Mess by Sandra Hutchinson some time ago and enjoyed it so much I asked her when she would be writing another book. She wasn't too sure at that time. Months went by and I contacted her again. So I was surprised when she contacted me to say "Sue, would you like to read my new book". I was delighted.

I've had quite a few things happen in my personal life which has meant many authors awaiting a review from me and Sandra Hutchinson has been waiting several weeks. I have finally found some time to catch up.

The Ribs and Thigh Bones of Desire

This starts off with David, his wife and his young daughter taking a flight, something very bad happens. All

that David can recall is the crash, later the burning and the storm. His hand is very badly burned, but he is alive.

We see David go through heaps of emotions, and also his sister trying to cope with the aftermath. However she cannot stay looking after him forever, this is where the baby sister who looked after his daughter comes in. Her name is Molly. She is 16 years of age but is very grown up and mature for her age, we get to understand why because we also get an insight to her life with her eccentric Mother. Well, I see her as eccentric. I am not sure if the author meant to portray her in this light but I found her fascinating.

Molly's mother has, shall we say.....sexual artistic tendencies. Her artwork appears umm quite interestingly baffling.

Because Molly's mother is 'out there' sexually some appear to think her daughter too follows in her mothers footsteps and see her in the wrong light, they couldn't be further from the truth.

We see Molly being asked by David's sister to take care of certain things in the home and David himself. Of course, Molly and David are becoming close. That would be inevitable, but as friends, and emotional support.

When David was admitted into a psychiatric hospital Molly is the only person David thinks of when he needs something. That's when he realizes that maybe, just maybe he is seeing Molly in a light that he shouldn't and tries hard to push it to the background.

There is heaps in this story that keep you turning pages. But I can tell you that the ending is not what you would expect.

I'm trying very hard not to give away spoilers, and I don't think I have so far, just a brief outline of 'some' of the interesting things that are in this book.

Talking of which, David's wife left behind a book personal to her thoughts I found that a page turner.

I hope I have whet your appetite to take a further look into this second book written by Sandra Hutchinson.

My Personal Thoughts

I have on some occasions spoken to this author and I also have her as a friend on my Facebook wall. I follow her messages from her wall. If I have learnt one thing is that Sandra does have a good way with words and a light sense of humor, I saw this come out several times in this book between dialogue that went on. Especially with Molly's mother.

I would call them "one liners" which did on several occasions make me giggle.

I would like to thank Sandra Hutchinson for taking the time to contact me and allow me to read a copy of her brand new book. I have a feeling this author will always deliver.