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Carolyn Brown

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From *New York Times* bestselling author Carolyn Brown comes a funny heartache of a novel about overcoming the past, confronting the future, and defying all expectations.

Everyone is talking about Jennie Sue Baker and the mess she made of her life in New York. The former high school queen bee—and wealthy darling of Bloom, Texas—has returned home after all these years, riding on a common bus and bearing two bounced alimony checks. In a town that thrives on gossip, Jennie's fall from grace has shamed her mother, set the town buzzing, and caused old, jealous enemies to whisper in delight. *They say* she's taken a job as a housekeeper, gotten a garage apartment, and might be crushing on Rick Lawson, a simple farmer with modest dreams.

As romance starts to bud, Jennie relishes what it means to follow her heart, find real new friends, and finally be herself—regardless of all the lying town chatter. But fate has another twist in store. Rumor has it that Jennie now stands to lose what matters most...unless she can convince Rick of one true thing—and that's love.

Small Town Rumors Details

Date : Published July 3rd 2018 by Montlake Romance

ISBN :

Author : Carolyn Brown

Format : Kindle Edition 288 pages

Genre : Romance, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit, Contemporary, Fiction

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From Reader Review Small Town Rumors for online ebook

Becky says

DNF-ed at 62%. Way too slow moving, and the characters' speech patterns were starting to really grate on me. Not sure Jennie Sue had any flaws at all beyond indecisiveness...I almost didn't blame Cricket for her suspicions about her, even though most of the book is from Jennie Sue's POV and we know from that fact that she's really just that nice.

Obviously it's just me...everyone else seems to enjoy the book. This is my first book from this author; the jury is still out about trying another.

Jessie says

Just 100% not the book for me. Full review on its way.

Samantha says

This was a book that hit all of my happy points. I love books that involve farms and really get down and dirty times. This book has a farm and a bit of high society as well. I have never read a book by Carolyn Brown before and I really enjoyed this one. I will definitely be looking her up again.

This is a sweet story about a small town in Texas and their desire for gossip. Everything that goes on in this town everyone else knows about. It has gotten to the point where some people spend their time trying to look good so gossip doesn't start flying.

Daughter of one of the richest family in town has come home. She came home not through flying, even though daddy owns a plane; but on a bus in ratty everyday clothing. Jennie Sue became the talk of the town to her mother's horror. She got to a point where she wanted to go home and work in the family business, but her mama wouldn't allow that to happen. She was to be a trophy wife and work on fundraisers and charities like good high society girls do.

Jennie Sue had a different idea for her life. She got two jobs, one as a house cleaner and another working in a bookshop. She rented a garage apartment and lived the life she wanted. She gained new friends, removed herself from the high society life to live a simple down to earth life.

A war hero to many, Rick Lawson, was just a farm boy. He was destined to stay on his farm forever tending his garden and going to the farmers market every Saturday. When he sees Jennie Sue he remembers the crush he had on her in high school. He knows that money matters in their little town. He never imagines that he could become friends with Jennie Sue; she has too much money and his sister Cricket can't stand her.

Jennie Sue has to finally determine what she will do with her life. She began to look to her future and started to take matters in her own hands. She also learned that real friends were those that stuck around even through bad times.

Carolyn Brown brought this town to life. With each character having not only a simple personality but one

that you can put on a few of my friends. I would recommend this book to anyone who loves stories about little towns, strong women, or just in need of a good book to read.

Despina says

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley for a honest review.

Small Town Rumors is like many of Carolyn Browns books, I love when she writes about people in small towns it's something she does very well. I really liked Jennie Sue and how she stood up to her mother and finally starts to live her own life. I really do love how over the top the characters were in this story, it made me laugh. I like Rick for Jennie Sue and Jennie Sue for Rick, they were overall a good match. I liked that we got Rick's pov along with Jennie's Sue's. I felt this book stumbled a bit at times but overall I enjoyed this book.

Aly says

"On a slow day, gossip hung over the town like smoke in an old western honky-tonk. On a good day, in the opinion of the community, it obliterated the sun."

This time, Carolyn Brown is taking us to the small town of Bloom, Texas where Jennie Sue Baker, the ex-wife of a rich man will have the tongues wagging when she come back in town, after the jerk ran off with a bag of diamonds and another woman and temporary take a post as a cleaning lady for a couple of folks.

Not everyone is happy to see Jennie Sue again but like it or not, Cricket Lawson will have to get used to the idea, since her brother quickly become friend with the young woman.

"Hate consumes love, sister. The two can't live in the same heart."

Dealing with rumors and jealousy is not the only thing Jennie is gonna have to face. She's done with letting her mother decide for her and now it's time to think about what she wants and how to get it. She's gonna charm everyone with her natural kindness anyway.

"He wondered what folks did with false rumors. Did they go into a recycling bin ? Change the names and the places and use them all again ?"

People are put to Earth for different reasons. Some people are mothers(or fathers), some are teachers or revolutionary or missionary. Me, I'm a reader. I was put here to read and appreciate the creation of other people. Don't know why this book made me thought about such intense subject but that's really the first thing that came to my mind after a couple of pages. After that, I thought that I really don't want this author to stop writting cowboy romance, but she do really well with women's fiction too. In fact, I enjoy it much more than I expected but then again, Carolyn Brown makes everything fun.

I must say that Rick Lawson was one of the best hero she ever wrote and probably my favorite so far. She can write really sweet and sexy male character, but Rick, he's special. A former Army Ranger who was discharged after stepping on an IED, he returned with lots of physical scars that made him doubt his own appeal but he didn't let it confine him into despair and choose the light instead. He's happy being a farmer who grow and sell vegetables. And he drive a bookmobile to share his passion for reading, I'm so in love!!!

"You have put sunshine back into my life and melted the chains from around my heart."

Jennie Sue was such a precious heroine too because like Rick, instead of feeling sorry for herself about other's behavior or the mistakes she made in the past, she choose the simple things that make her happy. It was cute how her and the hero joked about the rumors.

"Amos and Rick are both so happy about this, Jennie Sue. He's a firm believer in reading to children and teaching them to love books."

"Me, too. I intend to read to my children before they are even born."

Gaele says

Jennie Sue left Bloom, Texas as the "it girl". Wealthy, well-mannered, social standout she's gone to New York with her husband, bound to make a splash. But now, her husband outed as a lying, cheating thief, she's back in Bloom, in her mother's house, with a marriage that's fallen apart, no direction and a handful of alimony cheques that are tagged 'Insufficient Funds'. Of course, Jennie Sue wasn't prepared for her fall from grace, and she's never really been her own person – from her mother's iron-fisted control to her husband doing the same – she's tired of the superficial, the constraints and above all, the gossip.

Rick Lawson has come back to town after years in the military ended with an IED. He's living and working at the family farm, and he runs the bookmobile – making a life for himself that wasn't in his plans. The former star in high school, he's working on a very different life for himself, and he keeps running into Jennie Sue.

After moving away from her mother's constant criticisms and expectations, Jennie Sue is busily trying to find her own direction: living her life for others has always been her go-to, but now she's determined to be 'all grown up', find her own path and do whatever it takes to make people see her as Jennie Sue – not 'THE Jennie Sue'. Her new jobs – housekeeping and working in a bookstore, a small above-the-garage apartment, and a flirtation that may be more all make her days more exciting, even if the challenges are never-ending and the gossips never stop.

Several twists and turns, some unnecessary, add to the conflicts and struggles here: it was enough to see Jennie Sue reach for her own new life and overcome the negativity, and her interactions with the "older ladies" in town, with their own memories, desires and advice was lovely. A solid small-town feel with a rather predictable series of events, it was a nice read and perfect to while away a few hours.

I received an eArc copy of the title from the publisher via NetGalley for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Review first appeared at I am, Indeed

Heidi says

Five stars: A wonderful book filled with love, family, small towns and new beginnings. This book made me laugh and cry. Loved it!

Jennie Sue slinks off the bus. She knows the minute her feet hit the concrete that the small town of Bloom, Texas will be abuzz with gossip. She is right because at the moment, Cricket, a waitress at the local cafe is snapping pictures of Jennie Sue, eager to share them with all the locals, especially since Jennie Sue looks terrible. Jennie Sue was rich and popular back in high school, but now she is returning home after a failed marriage and heartbreak. She has had it up to here with her wealthy life and the expectations of her Mama. In a moment of anger, Jennie Sue decides to rebel against her mom and her high standards. She soon lands two jobs, one cleaning houses for two old spinster sisters in town, the other at the small bookshop. Jennie Sue breaks free, follows her heart and makes new friends, but will her happiness last?

What I Liked:

*Sigh.... I just love a good Carolyn Brown book. Her books are comfort food for the soul. Small Town Rumors has to be one of her best books to date. I loved the characters, the setting, the friendships and the romance. It was all so sweet. I laughed, I cried and I loved ever minute of this one!

*Jennie Sue is the heart and soul of this book. She returns home with her tail between her legs, determined to get away from the life of wealth and privilege that her parents want her to live. She rebels and finds her own path. It was a joy to watch Jennie Sue take chances, make new friends, make her own life choices and to see her fall in love. Her growth throughout is tremendous, and I loved cheering her on. She was a wonderful main character.

*I couldn't get enough of the secondary characters. My favorites hands down were the two spinster sisters, Nadine and Lettie. They are both in their nineties, and absolutely hilarious. These women brought so much heart and humor to the book. I loved them. They seriously made me giggle. Then there is Cricket, who turned out to be a surprise dark horse character. Cricket hates Jennie Sue when she comes back to town. She is very forthcoming in her feelings on Jennie Sue, but over time, Cricket grows and changes. I loved her by the end, in fact, I want Carolyn to write a whole book about Cricket. Rick, the love interest, is adorable. He is hardworking, kind, generous and somewhat shy. All in all, a terrific cast of characters.

*The small town setting lends so much to the story. Bloom, Texas is one of those towns where everyone knows everything about everyone in town. Gossip and rumors spread faster than wildfire. The rumor mill was downright funny, but I also liked the way the residents looked after each other.

*I was quite surprised by a big turn in the book. Everything went another way. I liked watching Jennie Sue overcome the sudden devastating events that rocked her world.

*I appreciated that the mother daughter relationship between Jennie Sue and her mother was realistic. At first, it was tight with tension. They butted heads, but eventually they work it out and come to understanding. I liked that they sat down and talked it through and understood each other.

*The romance was just right. It was one with some sparks, but it takes its sweet time. It is all about friendship and helping one another before it finally burns bright. It was slow, satisfying and wonderful.

*The ending was delightful. There is an Epilogue a few months down the road that catches the reader up on all that has happened in Bloom. Loved it! I hated that it ended.

And The Not So Much:

*I was disappointed that Cricket didn't find love. I was wanting that for her. We seriously need a book from Cricket's point of view.

*I was enjoying finally getting to know Charlotte, I wish that we could have delved a little deeper into her life.

Small Town Rumors was a delightful read. I loved the characters, the story, the setting and the romance. This is the perfect little book for light, fun summer reading, or anytime you want a feel good pick me up read. This book made me laugh and cry. Loved it!

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

Posted@Rainy Day Ramblings.

Debra Oliva says

Jennie Sue Baker returns to Bloom, Texas on the bus! Since her family is wealthy and has their own plane, that is grist for the small town rumor mill. Then she has a disagreement with her mother on her future plans – her mother wants her to find another husband - but Jenny Sue wants a job now that she has divorced her cheating thieving abusive husband and graduated from college.

Jenny Sue goes into town and accepts a temporary job cleaning house for her mother's arch-enemies and moves into a small apartment above a garage. More grist for the rumor mill!

She meets Rick Lawson, a wounded scarred veteran, who has taken over the family farm. Sparks fly but he can't believe that a rich heiress would be interested in a small town farmer.

The romance grows slowly and the other characters in the book are well-drawn and hilarious. Jenny Sue's determination to stand on her own two feet and not give in to her mother's pressure to assume her place in society is admirable. The small town portrayed in the novel reminded me of vacations spent in a small town in Arkansas where my father's family lived.

Many thanks to NetGalley, Montlake Romance and Carolyn Brown for the ARC. I will be reading more of her books.

Leslie aka StoreyBook Reviews says

This is a perfect summer read...well really a perfect anytime read! Especially since it is set in a small Texas town where rumors and gossip abound. The book has funky characters, some tension between the "haves" and the "have-nots", and family drama that will keep you entertained from beginning to the end. It is also a love story and knowing what you want and don't want to ensure a happy life going forward.

If you enjoy romance, laughter, and small town charm, you'll enjoy this book!

Sophia says

From the moment Jennie Sue gets off the bus in her West Texas small home town, she knows the rumors are flying. Her rich, snooty mother's 'Don't give the neighbors anything to talk about' is about to be blown up big when Jennie Sue is determined to start over and doesn't care what the tongues are wagging about. It's Carolyn Brown and its small town. I was all in for a feisty and fun summer read.

Small Town Rumors follows the story of Jennie Sue as she decides to come back home from the big city still grieving her still-born child, but relieved beyond measure to get shucked of her demanding, control-freak cheating ex. Her mama and daddy want to shower her with money and draw her right back into that rich, empty world she just broke free of, but Jennie Sue has her own ideas of what she wants. No more being arm candy to a rich hubby who'll just cheat and expect perfection. She earned her business degree, got some skills in the school of hard knocks, and wants simple living with honest to goodness friends. And, if it sends her mama and the other Sweetwater Belles to howling and the gossip to flying fast around town, then so be it.

I enjoyed this one so much. Oh course, I can't get enough of this author's books, but there is a little something extra when she focuses in on her heroine, friendships, and family with love just coming along naturally. The heroine of Small Town Rumors has been a fish out of water all her life with a society-conscious mother and a philandering yet loving father, but things start to fall into place the minute she humbles herself and takes a job as housekeeper for two feisty old-lady sisters who were a crack-up and took a second job as a bookshop worker for an old disorganized guy. Meanwhile, she finds herself interested in an area farmer who also drives the library book mobile and she hopes to make friends with his jealous and sharp-tongued sister. Getting her mama to reconcile with Jennie's new decisions and discovering a great deal about her family's past help finish the transformation in her life.

The big conflict through much of the book for her is whether she'll stick around and brave the rumors and expectations on her or start fresh in the city with a new job and life. Then, after a sad event towards the end, right when she's on the verge of real happiness, she's confronted with something that might mess it all up for good.

The usual hilarious antics, over the top quirky characters, small town activity, family and friends with a dash of romance made for a cozy and comfortable read that I can definitely recommend to others who enjoy the same.

My thanks to Montlake and Net Galley for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an honest review.

Tina Woodbury says

For all of my reviews: [www.readingbetweenthepagesblog.wordpress...](http://www.readingbetweenthepagesblog.wordpress.com)

The title of this book says it all – rumors, rumors, rumors. Gossip runs wild in the little town of Bloom, Texas. Whether you are young or old, rich or poor – everyone is fair game.

Jennie Sue Baker's marriage is over and she is left with nothing. She has no choice but to flee New York back to her parents' home in Bloom, Texas. She has been groomed all of her life to be a wife and serve on charities and committees. She tried that in New York and it didn't make her happy. Now she wants to try something new.

I admire Jennie Sue's drive to want more for herself. I can't blame her for wanting to be independent and not be taken care of by her family. She wants the opportunity to find herself and her passion, even if it means angering her mother in the process.

I love Lettie and Nadine! They are 90-something-year-old sisters with attitudes and spunk, and are deeply embedded in the rumor mill. I love the depth of friendship between the young and old citizens of Bloom. They take care of each other, have each other's backs, and genuinely care for one another.

There was an underlying book theme running throughout this story which I always find enjoyable. I was pleasantly surprised how often it popped up – from a used book store, to a bookmobile, a local book club, and more.

I was genuinely enjoying this book until the last seventy pages or so. Something, that I cannot tell you, happens and it completely changes the vibe of the story. In my opinion it went off in an odd direction and I found myself not enjoying it as much as I had been.

This made a wonderful poolside read! I was totally immersed in these characters' lives and hoped Jennie Sue would find her way to happiness.

*Thank you NetGalley, Montlake Romance, and Carolyn Brown for the opportunity to read and review this book for my honest opinion.

***Avonna says**

Check out all of my reviews at: <https://www.avonnalovesgenres.com>

SMALL TOWN RUMORS by Carolyn Brown is a contemporary romance perfect for a summer read in the shade of a big old tree with a glass of lemonade or sweet tea. It is a sweet romance with wonderful characters and a small town setting. This was my first book from this author, but it will definitely not be my last.

Jennie Sue Baker has returned to Bloom, Texas. The minute she steps off the bus, the local café is buzzing with rumors about her return. Jennie Sue was raised to be a society belle and trophy wife, like her mother, but her marriage falls apart. Her mother goes into damage control and wants to get Jennie Sue back on track for another husband, but Jennie Sue has changed and has other plans for her life.

Jennie Sue wants to build her own life with her business degree and never again rely on a man to support her. Her mother does not understand her and her father is not willing to interfere. As Jennie Sue accepts two jobs house cleaning which includes an above garage apartment her mother is scandalized and the rumor mill is working overtime.

Rick Lawson has returned to Bloom after medical discharge from the army. He is working to keep his family's farm running with the help of his sister, Cricket who waitresses at the local café. Rick does not believe in gossip, but he is interested to learn of Jennie Sue's return. He sees Jennie Sue for who she is and not her past status, but he also does not believe she could ever be interested in a scarred veteran with simple dreams.

The romance between Jennie Sue and Rick builds slowly throughout the book. Kisses and hand-holding build at a realistic pace to all other eventual sex scenes happening behind closed doors. The elder sisters that help Jennie Sue are very adorable and funny. Cricket is as big a gossip as the old ladies, but is never really malicious. I loved all of the characters in this book and especially Jennie Sue's spirit and determination. The small town of Bloom is depicted as a typical small town and I hope there are real towns just like it.

Wendy's Thoughts says

3.25 Give Them Something to Talk About Stars

*** * * 1/4**

Before Social Media, before the Internet and before Cell phones, there was a way towns entertained themselves with hot gossip...Yes, back in the day the OG way to spread rumor was the Party-line... What you say, what the heck was that...It was a land line phone where people shared the use of the line. You could pick up the receiver and hear other conversations happening by those you were sharing it... so listening in was a thing.

Oh, there were other way of spreading the word...

Simply taking what you heard in church, the barber shop or diner and adding your own take on it and then told your best friend.

Carolyn Brown uses her crafting to address this small town use of gossip as their main source of entertainment.

All her life, Jennie Sue Baker tried to please her mother and father. No matter how much she did what her mother wanted, it was never enough. She was taught to be almost a Stepford wife by her mother, a mother who had learned this behavior from her own mother and the mother before her.

The result was a young girl who was never was able to be herself. She was the perfect society woman, married off and moved away.

Now she is back to the town where she grew up. She has divorced her lying, cheating, thieving fugitive of a husband. During her marriage, this man was so controlling, he had her isolated and tasked with keeping the house in immaculate order. When Jennie Sue shared important information with the man, he upped and left her high and dry.

She is back home and it only takes a day or two for Jennie to see living at home with her mother's attitude about how Jennie Sue looks, eats and behaves will not work. Her mother is blocking the father giving Jennie Sue a position in the family business...Women do not work.

Well, Jennie Sue tells her "delicate" mother she is leaving. She will work and figure out her life. As she sits in the town's diner, she runs into one of the elder women of the town. She is thrilled to see Jennie Sue and when a housecleaning job with lodging is offered, Jennie Sue sees it as a way to give herself some breathing room to write her resume, do some interviewing and save some money. She snaps it up and is thrilled to help out these women.

Rick Lawson is another home town boy who has returned. He served and was a career military guy until an IED took that option away. With serious scars on his body and face, he has had to adjust to what was taken away. He has lived with his sister on the family farm running the produce business. He also does the mobile library. This is all very different from the high school sports star.

So here we have these two crossing paths and each time, there is a pull to see more of each other. This causes all sorts of rumors and gossip. Jennie Sue is already dealing with the fallout of her cleaning, working at a bookstore and living over the garage of her mother's mortal enemies.

There is a lot happening with this tale; there is the budding romance with Rick and Jennie Sue, the hysterical times with the elder ladies and the realization by others that Jennie Sue is a real down home woman who was not the society pawn her mother made her be.

This story did take some turns which caused some concern. (view spoiler)

This is the third book of Brown's I have read and will not be the last. She has a lovely way of creating characters who are interesting and towns with quirks and wonderful communities.

A gifted copy was provided by Montlake Romance via NetGalley for an honest review.

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Marleen says

Small Town Rumors took me by surprise with its genuine and wonderful characters. This was overall a sweet and charming read and presented everything I love about small town stories. Admittedly, at first, I was taken aback by the gossip and small-mindedness of the town's people, but fortunately, there were more layers to these characters. Thanks to Jennie-Sue's personality, who was so kind, humble and determined, she was able to open the eyes of many of the main protagonists.

It might seem like the classic story of the lost daughter returning to her hometown, but it turned out unexpectedly better.

I am surprised that I never read a Carolyn Brown book before. I will certainly explore other books by this author.

Donna Hines says

Small town rumor mill gossip is no match for Jennie Sue Baker who is on a triumphant return to Bloom Texas-- So be prepared, because she's back!

A New York high school queen returns to fall in love with Rick Lawson after a dismal marriage left her seeking fulfillment.

However, Rick lives a modest lifestyle not quite suited for cavier dreams.

The problem is will Rick be convinced of the desire for romance before he loses out on love?

When her ex husband is caught and charged for a crime by Feds we learn that everything will be confiscated..

Good lord, now what?!

Rick with the help of his sister 'Cricket' makes more than noise as they spend their days working between cafe's and bookmobiles...ok, well not quite exciting but wait

With a lil pixie dust this blooming romance may just be what they both need so I'll leave them to it and be moving on.

Thank you to Carolyn Brown, her publisher, NetGalley, and Aldiko for this e-read ARC in exchange for this honest review.
