



One for the Murphys

Lynda Mullaly Hunt

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A moving debut novel about a foster child learning to open her heart to a family's love

Carley uses humor and street smarts to keep her emotional walls high and thick. But the day she becomes a foster child, and moves in with the Murphys, she's blindsided. This loving, bustling family shows Carley the stable family life she never thought existed, and she feels like an alien in their cookie-cutter-perfect household. Despite her resistance, the Murphys eventually show her what it feels like to belong--until her mother wants her back and Carley has to decide where and how to live. She's not really a Murphy, but the gifts they've given her have opened up a new future.

One for the Murphys Details

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From Reader Review One for the Murphys for online ebook

Kathy says

Well done! This one really tugged at my heart. Be sure you have a box of kleenex nearby!

Lynda did a fabulous job with this story. I laughed and cried while reading it. We get to see Carley's defenses come down as she is surrounded by people who truly care about and love her. The story didn't end how I thought it would but life is not a fairy tale so it was probably a realistic portrayal of what often happens to kids in the foster care system.

A touching story that shows that one person really can make a difference in the lives of others. This is a middle grade read but has great cross-over appeal to an older audience.

Brandi Rae says

I liked this, but...

It was a wonderful story about a girl named Carley who ends up in foster care living with the Murphys, a family with three boys. The book had well drawn characters and situations. Sad and heartbreaking, I would definitely recommend it and can see early middle schoolers loving this book.

My issues dealt more with the details. The main character was 12 but in 8th grade? It was spring and the Red Sox were still playing, but there were basketball tryouts? The oldest son was "just a little younger than Carley" but in comparison to her seemed a lot younger. Her new best friend in this smallish town didn't know that she was a foster kid and thought that Mrs. Murphy was Carley's mom, even though it was partway through the school year already?

It was stuff like this that kept jumping out at me. Plus I thought that Carley's recollections of the night that led to her being put in foster care should have played a stronger point in the story.

I really wanted to like this book so much more. I loved Carley as a character. It was almost a great book, but regardless, it is a book that still covers an important topic that middle schoolers will want to read.

Margitte says

This is a beautiful book. Overwhelming, emotionally gripping, surprisingly touching. I did not expect to find my emotions running up and down different octaves like piano notes.

YA reading, for tweens. But just as heartwarming and uplifting for adults.

It's a short book, a quick read, but one that had me leave everything to finish it. I just could not walk away.

After closing the book I wished reality was not so removed from fiction in this case. If all foster parents were

like the Murphys, there would not have been so much heartache in the world of lost children. My heart just broke for this young girl.

I absolutely recommend this book to EVERYONE. A must-read.

Jillian Heise says

Review originally posted on Heise Reads & Recommends

A heart-breaking and heart-warming debut book from Lynda Mullaly Hunt, *ONE FOR THE MURPHYS* is a beautiful story of family perfect for middle grade readers (and adults!). It's about hope and unsureness and loss and love and friendship and caring and happiness and sadness and possibility and belonging and what it really means to be family. Carley and Toni and the Murphys are all a fantastic cast of characters who I just wanted to hang out with and hug. Adore Michael Eric and Adam - there's something about well-drawn brothers in books that always gets to me (probably because I have two of my own). And the way in which this story is written, with each chapter being its own kind of vignette of something that happens after Carley is sent to be fostered by the Murphys, is astounding in its ability to draw the reader into the story emotionally. The chapters are short and the whole story takes place over 80 days, but it is utterly impactful. One of the strongest themes throughout the book is the idea of an everyday person being a hero in someone's life. The ways in which you can be a hero to someone else are endless, and it's a gentle call to arms to do so. I love how this is prevalent in the book, but in a non-preachy kind of way.

Although I don't know from personal experience, what left an impression was how real and honest the emotions and feelings of this character felt for what I imagine a child in foster care would be going through. I adored this story, and the Carley, from the very start and my heart warmed and broke along with her as she traveled this journey of self-discovery and acceptance and finding strength and love. I want to hand this book off to every teacher and parent I know and I imagine there will be so many students for whom this type of story will resonate. Although Carley is in 8th grade, this book can definitely be read younger as well. Who doesn't want a family to love and take care of them? If you haven't yet read *ONE FOR THE MURPHYS*, I recommend you do yourself a favor and get to it soon.

I look forward to seeing what Lynda Mullaly Hunt will write next, and according to her website, her next middle grade book will be *ALPHABET SOUP* releasing in spring 2014. I'll definitely be reading that one after enjoying *ONE FOR THE MURPHYS* so much.

Hilary Graham says

It's been a long, long time since a book made me cry this much. But in a good way. Carley Connors has a less-than-perfect mom and a dirt-bag of a stepfather. When physical abuse at her step-dad's hand ends up with both Carley and her mom in the hospital, the state intervenes and Carley's handed over to the Foster Care system, which lands her with the Murphy family. Thank freaking God. Mrs. Murphy is one of those rare heroines whose goodness, honesty, and hard work actually leaves you with renewed faith in humanity. And Hunt had me rooting for Carley from the very first moment I met her.

But oh, the strife and heartache Carley and Mrs. Murphy must first go through. Like any of the great duos in

literature, Carley and Mrs. Murphy need each other in deep and profound ways. It was a gift watching the relationship between these two beautifully drawn characters develop, and Carley's personal growth is the direct result of it. Lynda Mulla Hunt's portrayal of love, loss, and family hits all the right notes, and as a reader, Carley's journey from "tough" disaffectedness to emotional vulnerability is one that will stick with me for some time to come.

And the line where the title comes from absolutely melted my heart.

Donalyn says

A touching, honest book about Carley, who is sent to live with a foster family, the Murphys, after a violent episode with her stepfather. Carley doesn't believe she is worthy of love or a true family, but the Murphys show her otherwise.

I challenge anyone to read the last chapter without crying. I think I need a tissue rating for the books I've read this year.

Isabelle says

One for the Murphys is the absolute best books that I have ever read, by far. In the beginning it was really emotional, but I didn't cry because Carly was strong. I wanted to be strong with her, but the end was different. I cried a lot, while they were exchanging gifts. After I finished though, I cried like Carly was there in front of me, crying with me. Carly was so courageous and brave. I wish I was more like that. She was definitely more softened by Dan the Man, Michael Eric, Adam, but mostly Mrs. Murphy. She made Carly want to be who she is. The name of this book is perfect, and you will understand in the chapter "One for the Murphys." I loved it so much, and I wish so much that Carly was real. I hope there will be more books about Carly and if something else happens. I really got attached her during the story!

Bye Carly! I love you!

Joanne says

An often funny and also very touching novel about a girl forced into foster care when she and her mother are hurt by her mother's new husband, ONE FOR THE MURPHYS is a beautiful book that reminds us that as much bad as there is in the world, there is equal good. Carley, a street-smart girl who didn't go to school and used to get her clothes from donation bins, uses sarcasm and avoidance to deal with her foster placement in the home of the Murphy family, where she is treated kindly and with respect; a new experience for her that she finds confusing and uncomfortable. But Mrs. Murphy teaches her how to understand love and how to accept it and in the end, (a tough ending, but a realistic one) Carley recognizes her life is hers to own and shape, despite challenges she may face.

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Carrie Gelson says

I finished this book in one early morning, teary sitting. This book seemed to pull at every heartstring I have. I am a Mom first but a teacher in an inner city school second and in the many years I have taught, I have seen a lot. This book made me want to rush into my own children's rooms and hug them tight. It made me want to smile at every amazing foster parent I know for providing love, security and trust to the children in their care. And it reminded me that we all have hearts that have endless room. There are children I have taught through the years that have so deeply wormed their way into my heart that I can never ever forget them. We are always better people to have known each other, even when our time together is short. This book speaks to the power of unconditional love, the magic of resiliency and the need we all have to matter. This is my newest "must read" book that everyone I meet will have to hear about. Thank you Lynda Mullaly Hunt!

Audra M. 8B says

This book is AMAZING, it is one of my favorites. I has some really sad parts, and some really happy parts. Over all it is a great book.

Karen says

This book has made me stronger. I didn't really understand why I wasn't crying about the part when Carley described how Dennis hurt her and her mother helped him. It wasn't until later that I realized that I wasn't crying because Carley wasn't. I wanted to be as strong as Carley. When she did cry at the end, the tears that I was saving up started flowing because Carley was crying, and I realized that it was okay to cry. Carley was so brave throughout the whole book that I knew that Mrs. Murphy was right that crying doesn't mean that you are a wimp, it just means that you're human because Carley has kept her feelings to herself until Mrs. Murphy came along.

I have a little message for almost all of the players in the book. Michael Eric- You are one of the MOST caring person that I know. If you can survive that seizure, you can survive anything. Adam- Always remember that there are superheroes, but you have to become one first. Daniel-I understand why you felt like Carley was stealing your mom away from you, but the truth is that Mrs. Murphy has such a big heart that there is enough love to last everybody in the whole wide world a lifetime. Mr. Murphy- Your Boston Red Sox will win over the Yankees someday;I'm sure of it. Toni- Remember to chase your dreams and that Tony award will be placed into your hands one day. Mrs Murphy- Way to stay loving and caring for Carley. You made her feel safe when nobody else could. Rainer- You can't fool me for one second about that act of yours. I know that you have some insecurities in you. Mrs. Murphy has taught me a lot of things, and that is one of them. Carley- Stay strong and you will have a wonderful life ahead of you. You inspire me!!

Wendy says

Multiply manipulative. The actual writing is competent enough, but the characters--and the plot--I can't find anything nice to say. The book is its strongest in the uncomfortable-to-read beginning where Carley has trouble adjusting to her new home. But that's all over much too soon, and there are eventually TWO denouements that don't work. One deliberately withholds information from the reader in order to create and then resolve drama, and the other is cheesy. The author seems to be leading the reader to a conclusion, re: the mother's actions on the night Carley is injured, that I disagree with strenuously. So the book manages to be both overly sweet and borderline offensive to me.

Paul Hankins says

I had read 40 pages into ONE FOR THE MURPHYS before I had to leave for family activities yesterday.

So, I picked the book back up, and with a cup of coffee, I sat out on the back deck to read some more.

And then, I ended up finishing the book.

Those in my reading community often wonder what books we will love in the next reading year, and we have certainly had some wonderful titles in 2012 already, but I think ONE FOR THE MURPHYS is a game changer for sure.

Read the reviews. Get a feel for the book. But you won't know it's "heart" until you've actually read this beautiful book.

For what it's worth, ONE FOR THE MURPHYS comes with Mr. Hankins's highest recommendations.

Shelley says

SPOILER ALERT If you have not read the book and don't want to know what happens, you should not read this review.

Okay, I am very conflicted about this book - just as conflicted as Carley Connors is about being a foster child. I highly recommend this book, especially to foster parents or people who are considering becoming foster parents or people who have regular contact with foster children. However, from this review, you might not think so. What I dislike about the book appears to outweigh what I like about it. It really doesn't, though. Since I am a social worker (by default, through a long and winding road of state employment that covered law enforcement, corrections, etc.), I am very concerned with what I did not see in the book. But I still love the book. I do. My very favorite line is, "'We're almost there,' Mrs. MacAvoy says, taking a corner faster than I think any social worker is supposed to." Cracks me up every time, probably because some of my kiddos think exactly the same thing when they ride with me. That said, here is my review:

What I LOVED about this book: Carley Connors is REAL - every nuance, every knot in her stomach, every emotional conflict, every minimalization of past events, every smart aleck response to change the subject, etc. I ABSOLUTELY LOVE HER!! She embodies the turmoil felt by every foster child over the age of

three, regardless of placement and regardless of length of time in the system. Carley perfectly expressed the anger she felt at her mother, but the love she still felt for her and how confusing that was. A few times I caught myself thinking Carley's voice was too old for a 12- or 13-year-old. Then I stopped and remembered a couple of my former kiddos who were that age and were just as savvy, just as witty, just as street-wise, and way more jaded about life. Watching Carley's evolution in foster care felt real - and it was watching, more than reading. I felt like a fly on the wall. I have seen kids come into a new home with their guard up, keeping an aloof distance from everyone because they were afraid to get too close. In Oklahoma, we try to keep them in the same schools for consistency, but that is often not possible, so there is more anxiety and more concerns about being an outsider at the new school. After a while, though, those walls the foster kids put up start to crumble a little at a time. Some days they seem to be gone completely, but one little thing can build them right back up in an instant. Foster kids are sponges - they watch and absorb everything for processing later. They do most of this on their own, just like Carley. The feelings of not belonging are constant, even when they are with other family members. It takes patience and time and near-constant reassurance that they are safe, they are loved, they belong, they are good, they are smart, they are winners... Carley was spot-on.

I loved the interaction between Carley and the boys. It also rang pretty true. I liked the conversations between Carley and Mr. Murphy, but I was sad that these didn't really seem to occur often until Toni broke the ice with Mr. Murphy through their baseball rivalry of the Yankees and Red Sox. Mrs. Murphy was good and honest and kind and caring. She genuinely loved Carley and tried to do the right thing by her. I figured out she had been a foster child way before she admitted it to Carley. I liked that the family was able to show their emotions with each other, and to demonstrate that families can disagree and argue, but forgive and still love each other.

I enjoyed Carley's friendship with Toni, and her antagonistic relationship with Rainer. Although, I wish Rainer's character had been a little more explained. It would have been nice to have seen them call a more definite truce on their own, without interference from Toni.

What I HATED about this book: When Carley asked if she could call Mrs. Murphy "Mom", she is rebuffed - gently, but still rebuffed and still heartbroken. There is no discussion about using a nickname. (Mrs. Mom, which Carley joked about with Toni earlier, would have been a PERFECT nickname.) Mrs. Murphy's excuse is, "I just don't think it would be a healthy thing for you", even after Carley says she knows it's just pretend. Mrs. Murphy was a foster child, so she should have known how important this was to give Carley a sense of belonging and fitting in - even if it was pretend and there was no intention to make Carley a permanent part of the family. Wanting to call the foster parents "mom" and "dad" is completely normal, especially when there are other children in the home who do so.

Mrs. Murphy should have known how the court system worked, yet she spoke as if she had no understanding of the legal system with regard to foster care. Mrs. MacAvoy, the social worker, was basically non-existent. Once she placed Carley in the home, she did not bother to come visit and check on her until Carley called her several weeks later. I don't work in Connecticut (where the book is set), but I find it very hard to believe that once they place a child, social workers don't have to go back out unless they get a phone call. The social worker should have had an on-going and hopefully, close relationship with Carley. Mrs. MacAvoy should have kept the foster parents and Carley in the loop as to what was going on in the court case. Instead, Mrs. MacAvoy is a peripheral figure who is crazy busy all the time and even talks to Carley like she is a bother sometimes. That's not okay. (While social workers are mostly crazy busy, our kids deserve our full attention and respect, even when they are not acting their best.) Carley should also have had an attorney who represented her only, and who would also have kept her informed on the case. Carley should have been asked what she wanted to happen in the case - whether or not she wanted to go back to her mother or if she felt safe with her.

Carley had no professional to express her feelings to - not the social worker, not an attorney, not a counselor, no one. No foster child who had been through what she went through would have been without a therapist. Foster Parents are not trained as counselors. Victims of abuse and neglect need the insight of professionals to ensure they are getting the proper treatment to move forward in their lives and to ensure they do not blame themselves for what happened to them. Instead, none of the core issues or feelings are ever resolved for Carley. This is very bothersome.

Mrs. Connors' character was not fleshed out at all. She was stereotypically a neglectful, abusive mother. There was talk of charging her criminally for her part in the abuse, but this is magically dropped because Carley's stepfather admits she did not help (even though we know that she did). I found that implausible, but was willing to overlook that, thinking that she would be held accountable in the juvenile court system. But, she was not. She woke up from her coma, went through rehab to learn to walk again, was released from the hospital, and got Carley back. She was not required to go to court, complete a treatment plan, nothing. In reality, she would most likely have been required to complete counseling for domestic violence victims, complete parenting classes, prove that she had adequate income and a safe, stable home for Carley, participate in family counseling with Carley, etc. She was allowed to see Carley unsupervised, and to say mean and hateful things to her - even telling her she didn't want her anymore. [That is not a reality of the foster care system that I know. Visits with parents are supervised until we know that the child will be safe to visit alone. They would never have been allowed to visit alone the first few times, even if Mrs. Connors was considered a non-offending parent.]

Telling Carley - or any foster child - that they cannot have any contact with the former foster family they have possibly grown to love is just asking for those kids to develop Reactive Attachment Disorder. It is rarely better for the child to undergo the additional trauma of removal from a foster home and also have to suffer a complete disconnect from the persons in the home, especially if they have gotten attached to the family.

Carley would not have been returned to Mrs. Connors' care by the Court unless she could have been returned SAFELY. No one seemed to care that there were huge red flags as to the potential for future neglect. No one asked Carley about her concerns for the future if she went back to her mom. Everyone just talked about how much her mother "really loved her" and had "put her life on the line" for Carley. Sorry, that's not good enough. By not ensuring that Carley would be safe when returned home, all of the adults were complicit in allowing Carley to minimize her mother's participation in her abuse. Mrs. Connors learned NOTHING from Carley going into foster care! She stated that they would move back to Las Vegas (where Carley does NOT want to be) and everything would be "just like it was", which was horrible.

NO ONE - and I mean NO ONE - was advocating for Carley. And that broke my heart...

Kristi says

When we meet Carley she is being released from the hospital and finding herself in the care of a foster family. As a reader, we don't initially know how Carley got to be where she is, but through flashbacks in the story we are made aware of the horrors that Carley has had to endure.

Carley has never known what a loving household is like. She hates herself for not hating this foster family. We watch her struggle as she comes to terms with herself and with the actions of her mother.

One for the Murphys was an incredibly touching novel. There were several times that I felt tears brewing in my eyes. (Although there were plenty times when I was laughing too!) I wouldn't describe One for the Murphys as a sad story. It's not a sad story, it's a hopeful story. It's about family and love. It explores different types of love and although they are different, one isn't less powerful than the other.

To me, Carley seemed much older than her twelve year old/thirteen year old self. Although it worked, because Carley has seen and experienced things that no twelve year old should have to.

I really enjoyed all the characters. The three Murphy boys, Mr. and Mrs. Murphy.... Carley's friend Tori, even Carley's teacher Mr. Rueben. They were all incredibly written. I battled the most with Carley's mother. I couldn't decide if I felt sorry for her or not. I think perhaps she needed someone in her life like Mrs. Murphy and it's a shame she didn't have that.

We don't get that fairy tale happy ending, but we get a realistic one. And we are left with the hope that Carley is a better person for her experiences and that she will continue to thrive because of her time with the Murphys.

You should add One for the Murphys to your reading pile! It's a quick read and it will definitely touch your heart!
