



## Ten Girls to Watch

*Charity Shumway*

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**Ten Girls to Watch** Charity Shumway

**A radiant debut novel about stumbling through the early years of adulthood; and a love letter to the role models who light the way.**

Like so many other recent graduates, Dawn West is trying to make her way in New York City. She's got an ex-boyfriend she can't quite stop seeing, a roommate who views rent checks and basic hygiene as optional, and a writing career that's gotten as far as penning an online lawn care advice column.

So when Dawn lands a job tracking down the past winners of *Charm* magazine's "Ten Girls to Watch" contest, she's thrilled. After all, she's being paid to interview hundreds of fascinating women: once outstanding college students, they have gone on to become mayors, opera singers, and air force pilots. As Dawn gets to know their life stories, she'll discover that success, love, and friendship can be found in the most unexpected of places. Most importantly, she'll learn that while those who came before us can be role models, ultimately, we each have to create our own happy ending.

## Ten Girls to Watch Details

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Author : Charity Shumway

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## From Reader Review Ten Girls to Watch for online ebook

### Beth says

When I finished *Ten Girls to Watch*, I was speechless. I sat there, looking at the book and waving my hands and trying to come up with something more specific than "That was *fabulous*." Because it *is* fabulous. But it also feels like this book deserves more than that. So here are some words.

*Ten Girls to Watch* centers on Dawn, who is 23 and job-hunting and living in a tiny apartment in Brooklyn while she struggles to pay rent every month. She does something she doesn't respect about herself and goes to a party her ex-boyfriend invited her to, a party where said ex's date is his new girlfriend. And new girlfriend introduces Dawn to Regina, who offers her a job.

That sounds clinical, doesn't it? As if our protagonist, by virtue of being our protagonist, is now primed for a life of success and fame. But this isn't that story. And yet it *also* isn't just the story of Dawn's struggles to move on past her ex, and to do well at her job, and to balance confusion and loneliness in the meantime. Her new job involves tracking down the 500 previous *Ten Girls to Watch* so her magazine can host a 50th anniversary gala, and while Dawn's interview questions are exactly what you'd expect - "How has the magazine's selection changed your life?" - it opens the door for each of these women to be warm and real and wise. *Ten Girls to Watch* becomes a treatise on women who accomplish great things, from air force piloting to TV-show-hosting to teaching first grade for forty years, and this is perfectly complemented by Dawn's warmth and sincerity and willingness to listen and take in and learn, and by her appreciation of all sorts of accomplishments.

Dawn is so much more than the transcriber here. She isn't only a vehicle to bring out other women's stories (then again, in a nice balance, these women aren't downgraded to become mere gears propelling her growth). She's smart and sweet and nice *and* flawed. She makes mistakes that feel real. She's upset at herself for them. She lives in her head and analyzes herself in a way that feels achingly familiar:

A job you find online and apply for and get through your own shining resume - no one can say anything about that except congratulations, you deserve it. A job you get because you met someone at a party in the Hamptons - it has the taint of privilege, as if Regina hadn't chosen me because I'd wowed her but because I'd been vouched for by the *right* people. I knew it was "how the world worked," and after a year of searching, it wasn't like I was going to turn down the job. It was just that this was the sort of thing I'd resented most about Robert. When he wanted a summer job on Capitol Hill, his dad called some friends. When I wanted a summer job anywhere other than Oregon, my dad said good luck. Meaning I was usually the person who got screwed by "that's how the world works." Just shrugging and taking advantage of it now made me feel a little like I was pocketing an envelope full of dirty money. Pocketing gratefully, but still.

And then there's XADI and Helen, women who are powerful, unique individuals, who add such wonderful shading to the story. XADI, who is valuable precisely because she is so competent, who is steadfastly herself. And Helen, who wrote a book I would love to read, "about the cultural and spiritual fallout of World War I... 'Remembering the Great War,' the essay opens, 'requires modern man to face twin compulsions: the compulsion to find sense in tragedy and the compulsion to insist on its senselessness.'"

There's so much wisdom allowed to breathe through the pages, and yet it's coupled with Dawn's determination and hard work and failure, and the acknowledgment of the same on the part of these women, and so it never becomes that sort of treacly sentiment it so easily could.

"It sounds like a lot when you summarize it, but I don't do all of it every day. If you want to know the truth, most days I feel like I'm miserably behind and only doing about half of what I should be doing. But when you look back you can see that you're building something. I think people who say 'Don't look back' are crazy. I wouldn't survive if I weren't looking back and patting myself on the back all the time for making it this far. I've been thinking about memory a lot more these days, with my mom and all. And I think dwelling in the past can be... I don't know, very good, I guess. I just know that if you look back at it, the days add up to something."

This isn't enough. So let me just say that this book is an ode to women and to their friendships and to the amazing things they can accomplish, whether they're wise and experienced or just starting out. And it's a beautiful, beautiful thing.

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### **Kelly Hager says**

Dawn West is currently just scraping by as a writer. She works (under a pen name) as a lawn care expert, even though she doesn't really know much about it. (Turns out there are books for everything!) Then she gets an awesome temp assignment: find out what happened to all the winners of Charm Magazine's 10 Girls to Watch. Some have gone on to achieve high levels of fame (including an Oprah-like talk show host and media mogul) but most are relatively anonymous---doing great things but not necessarily household names.

Meanwhile, she also meets a columnist at the magazine, a very cute guy who does their "Secret Agent Romance" column...

This is a ridiculously fun book. It has great things to say about women throughout the ages and what it's like to be just starting out in the world, granted, but it's also a complete joy to read.

This is actually one of my favorite books to read, the ones that are so true but that are still lighthearted and just...well, fun.

I completely overidentified with Dawn, although our situations aren't that similar. Yes, we are both trying to prove ourselves but I at least have the luxury of a full-time job. I can't even imagine how scary it would be to have a temp job, knowing that you only have a definite paycheck for a few months.

The time she spends talking to the past winners were my favorite parts of the book. There's a great deal of wisdom in those sections. But the other really fun parts, obviously, are the ones between Dawn and Elliot (Mr. Secret Agent Romance). Love stories make me happy.

This is a light, sweet summer read that is almost guaranteed to make you happy.

Recommended.

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### **Kerri says**

First, I have to say, I was pretty upset that someone got to writing this book before me. Talk about life imitating art, imitating life. As a 23-year-old with two years out of college under her belt still looking for full-time work in the magazine business, this story definitely hit home for me in many ways.

Second, I was expecting an extremely frothy beach read out of this book. What I got was partly that, yes (this was a very easy, lightweight read) but also partly something much more important. For my whole life I have been surrounded by strong women but especially since I've graduated from college, I've been thinking much more about the role of women in the workforce (what does success mean for us? how do we navigate being in charge, but not seeing sweetness as a liability?) and in a community onto ourselves. I loved the feeling of feminine power in this book ... of women who were successful in more ways than one -- in big, flashy ways; in small, noble ways; in careers, in artful pursuits, in family and in relationships.

I also loved that these women failed, failed deeply ... but most, failed well. Although this book finished with a pretty (although not perfect) little wrap up, throughout there was so much small, simple, but also profound wisdom about letting yourself mess up. Letting yourself be confused and afraid. Letting yourself change your mind. Even though the relationship stuff endured by Dawn, the protagonist, was a bit cliche, I still enjoyed reading it and saw it's point. This was a part of Dawn's failing; a part of her growth.

While there were a lot of women interviewed in this book (as Dawn moves her way down the list of 500 Women to Watch) but there were a few that shone through. There was the woman who spent her life teaching children to read; who found her success in a noble and quiet way that didn't make her any less important than the women who became famous talk show hosts of physicists. There was the woman who said she couldn't understand why everyone always said to "never look back" because looking back was the only way you saw your days add up to something. There was the woman who was convinced that sweetness was not a liability for women, but a gift, something to be proud of. There are tons of other women here whose small gems of wisdom impacted me in some way.

I felt like the moral of this story was just great for me at this time in my life. It might not be the same for every woman reading it ... but as someone who is in almost the exact same position as Dawn, it was a nice reminder that things have a way of working out in the end. That career and love and family and everything else worth working on and working toward are a part of a long journey. One that only starts now ... and really never ends.

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### **M. says**

I had a great experience reading this book, largely due to the charming and memorable narrator, Dawn. An aspiring writer stuck just below the lowest rung of publishing, Dawn is both touchingly honest and hilariously funny, and I laughed many times at the clever and surprising descriptions and references throughout the story. This is a book about women, and I loved the variety of unique, real feeling characters and appreciated that none of them ever dipped into cattiness or cliche. The author creates a really enjoyable world in this book- one that is not filled with perfect people, but where kindness reigns and people can actually become better. Pick it up on a rainy day and you'll find that Dawn's sunny disposition is an

infectious mood lifter. Highly recommend!

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### **Erin says**

I feel like a scrooge giving such an optimistic book a low rating, but it read a bit too much like an improbable fairy tale to me. Dawn's string of bad career, romance, and roommate luck seemed piled-on, and the resolutions were far too easily reached. Predictability isn't a problem if the road to the expected ending is filled with interesting twists and turns, but that wasn't the case here. None of the secondary characters and plot lines were interesting to me, and the former "Girls to Watch" that Dawn interviewed offered nothing more than sunny, cliched words of encouragement.

On the plus side, I loved the underlying message that nice girls don't necessarily finish last. Dawn never has to compromise her personality to find success, and that's a great message.

For young women going through a rough patch, Dawn's story could offer hope and inspiration. For young women who have recently gotten through the awkward post-college years, Dawn's story is mildly insulting.

\*Note - I received this book for free from Atria Books.

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### **Denise Oyler says**

I did like the author of this book and her writing style. She is clean and very insightful in some of her descriptions. Several parts of this book stuck out to me:

Pg. 32 Regarding second-guessing yourself: "If you're going to try something else first, you need to stop second-guessing yourself." There's time for reflection and course correction if necessary, but you're not there yet." Loved that! Great reminder for me.

Pg. 80 "Unfortunately, her flirtatious fervor sounded like real fury, leading me to infer that in addition to being insatiably hungry for male attention, she was among the poor, misguided souls who confused outright assault with coy banter. Akin to my problem of slight meanness in place of real flirting, but a much more virulent form of the disease."

Pg. 131 "Most days I feel like I'm miserably behind and only doing about half of what I should be doing. But when you look back you can see that you're building something. I think people who say 'Don't look back' are crazy. I wouldn't survive if I weren't looking back and patting myself on the back all the time for making it this far." I love this!!

Pg. 232 "...Families come in all shapes and cope in all sorts of ways, and sometimes there is nothing like a divorce to liberate everyone. Parents and kids, they lose this dream of the perfect family, but sometimes - not always, definitely not always, - but sometimes it finally clears out the junk and lets people be who they ought to be."

Pg. 234 Re: parents and divorce: "I realized that I'd pretty much been treating my parents as if their stories were encapsulated in a single snapshot, as if they were forever locked in place as the unhappy people they'd been when I was in high school. I needed to stop doing that. In the last seven years, I'd gone from being a kid

who couldn't drive to being a college graduate who paid their own bills. It seemed quite possible that they'd change a little too."

I really liked this because I believe that one single event or time in our life does not tell our story. Our stories are a culmination of our experiences, of those we loved, and the efforts we make. We all have our ups and downs and our stories are being written continually and each of us are evolving daily. Our lives and who we are are made up of many "single snapshots."

Pg. 275 Re: Serendipity: "...she was handing me a photo of the one things she wasn't quite sure she deserved. Everything else she'd worked for. Everything else was hers. But this? Pure serendipity. And maybe that made it the most precious thing of all because it could so easily not have happened. Maybe, once chance plays so big a part in your life, you realize more is out of your control than you'd like to think."

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### **Tesia Lewis says**

Of the handful of friends I have outside of social media, only one of them has a love of books that is equal to mine - even if the types of books we enjoy are incredibly different. This friend gave me a copy of *Ten Girls to Watch* by Charity Shumway that was an advanced reader's copy from over five years ago. I don't remember the story of how she got it - from another friend, I believe - but she said it had been collecting dust on her shelf and she gave it to me. In all honesty, I was a little wary of it because of the title alone; it sounds a little too teen magazine for my tastes. I'm glad I can tell you that I was pleasantly surprised.

Dawn West is a recent college graduate trying to make it in New York City. Dawn dreams of being a writer but has only gotten as far as writing an online lawn care advice column. It seems like her dream is getting pushed further and further from her sights until - through a connection with an ex-boyfriend she can't seem to shake - she lands a job for Charm. Dawn gets to hunt down past winners of a contest called "Ten Girls to Watch" that highlights amazing women and their accomplishments. She can't believe her luck - getting paid to interview hundreds of women who are riveting beyond belief.

Honestly, there were so many things about *Ten Girls to Watch* that I absolutely adored, that kept me wanting to read and read until there was nothing left. Instead of listing every single reason I have, I'm only going to focus on two specific things for this review. First, everything about this book felt so real. The characters were unbelievably relatable, especially Dawn. At first, I kind of expected that Dawn was going to be the type of character that was basically handed everything in a completely unrealistic way. In reality, Dawn was a hot mess who just barely had a grasp on her life. Even though she technically had a little boost to land the job (from her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend), she worked so hard to prove that she was the one who deserved it. In so many ways, I saw myself in her. Holding on by a thread but still pushing forward.

Secondly, the plot was different than all of the ideas I had in my head when I first started reading. I was expecting piles and piles of cheese with a dash of cliches here and there. And while it did have its moments, this was a story about growth and the importance of self realization. And most importantly, it was a story about female relationships (which is my absolute weakness). Dawn wasn't just a vehicle to tell the stories of the women she interviewed. She became friends with each and every one of them by being accepting, sincere and willing to learn from them. The friendships that were formed and showcased were probably my favourite part about the book.

Despite the questionable parts (that were decidedly sporadic), *Ten Girls to Watch* was an overall great read.

It comes with a very high recommendation from me, especially for those of you who enjoy strong and multi-dimensional female characters as well as stories about personal growth. Once you get into it, you won't be able to stop. You will find yourself feeling attached to each and every girl that is featured in the inserts or that Dawn takes the time to get to know and you won't want to put it down. Those are the best kinds of books.

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### **Sabrina Laitinen says**

This novel begins with Dawn West landing a job with a popular glossy magazine called "Charm" Dawn's grandiose expectations are shattered when she learns that the job will only be temp, and that her office is located in the sub-basement of an older building in a dodgy area of New York.

Her assignment is to locate past winners of the magazine's prestigious "Ten Girls To Watch". Dawn will interview and compile the necessary information of these women for an upcoming gala 50th anniversary celebration.

Each past winner has unique talents that have contributed to success. We read how Dawn grows and matures through life's lessons, many a direct result of this temp job.

I personally took longer than usual to finish this book. It is written with intense passion. It took me back to a time in my life where I experienced and related to many of the things that Dawn had to face.

This is a dynamite debut from an up and coming author. Charity Shumway has captured a place in time many women will relate to and I highly recommend this engaging read! The character development is outstanding, and book clubs will find so much to discuss.

I can envision another novel that features Dawn and the main cast of characters! In any event, be on the lookout for this author!

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### **Book Him Danno says**

I have great things to say about the beginning and the ending of this book....but I have to tell you that the middle just drug...on....and....on. The beginning got me ready to read a fast paced book about love, loss, growing up and growing apart, but the middle left me desperate to put the book down and read something else. The ending made me smile and glad that I had slugged through the middle, but I really wished the middle could have been edited tighter and made more interesting to the reader.

I loved the way the women who had won the contest years ago spoke of their lives now compared to what they thought they would be like. I loved the fact that most of them agreed that 'You can't have it all.' But they had fabulous lives that were filled with adventure and meaning anyway. Lives that were the envy of many and made great magazine articles.

One of the winners, a friend of the protagonist Dawn, told her that she knew everything would work out. She told her that she knew this because of her life experience and the evidence that she had built over-time and that Dawn would find that out as she accomplished things in her life and built up her own reserves of

evidence. Growing-up is difficult and when you think you are finally there you realize you still have a lot to learn. Dawn had things to learn about life, careers, friends, and love. Wonderful advice from the women made this book inspirational, but too long and drawn out in my opinion. More about Dawn and less about the women would have helped move this story along.

The story sucked me in but then just slowed to a crawl. I kept reading here and there wondering when things would get interesting again....and when the book picked up again, I finally finished it. I did enjoy the ending and even shed a few tears. Dawn had a hard time at it for awhile, but with the evidence stacking in her favor I think....well you will have to read the book if you really want to know.

Lots of good things in this book and lots of dead air also. A good 100 pages could be cut to make this a book you couldn't put down...I wish the editor had taken a stronger hand and done that...it would have made a much better all-around enjoyable book capable of best-seller status.

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### **Mary says**

As expected this book is fun, easy, single-girl chick lit. It started off really strong with Dawn graduating college and moving to New York to try and make it as a writer. At first I was laughing out loud at Dawn's wit and charm. Then it took a turn for the worse. I was really put off by her interaction with her ex-boyfriend. She had no backbone and allowed herself to be pushed, pulled and treated like crap. I tried not to judge her too harshly because what girl hasn't been in that situation before? If that wasn't bad enough she let her roommate and new fling walk all over her, all the while just feeling sorry for herself.

When it came to interviewing the winners of the Ten Girls to Watch contest I was reluctant when ALL of the stories were positive and perfect. Sure some of the women would go on to do amazing things, but every single one of them? It quickly became boring and too contrived.

Ultimately this book is about growing up. Just when you think you are finally there you realize you still have a lot to learn. Dawn had things to learn about life, careers, friends and love. Wonderful advice from the women made this book inspirational, but it was too long and drawn out in my opinion. More about Dawn and less about the women would have helped move this story along.

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### **Katie says**

I wasn't sure about this at first, but then it got REALLY GREAT.

It started out a bit rough and I was kind of worried that it would end up being one of those books that I couldn't relate to because the character would get all these breaks that I haven't gotten and all the women profiled were just magically successful.

But it wasn't that in the end. Instead, it felt like my own life. The way you piece things together and you don't always see where things are leading until you get there. All the stories that the women shared felt so real and helpful (reading the acknowledgments and the photo copyrights, I think they ARE real), like advice I could

take.

And ohhh. Just seeing a book that's a celebration of women and female friendships is just amazing. I loved Lily. And XADI.

If you read this, though, be aware that you might have to push through the beginning, particularly if you're subject to secondhand embarrassment. (This book made me realize that it's not that I tend towards secondhand embarrassment, it's that I'm not easily embarrassed at all, so the "embarrassing" scenarios are lost on me.)

But it is a most definite rec.

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### **Sonja says**

[Lily and Dawn becoming roommates]

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### **Ari says**

IQ "In her reminder that life is long and you can't just look at one moment and judge your life based on that snapshot" pg. 234

Love that quote, fun book. My only quibble with the ending is how dramatic it was, honestly Dawn had gone through a lot by the end of the book and I did not understand why the author despised her protagonist so (I'm only half joking). I suppose the ending was realistic but at the same time what are the odds that a broke 20-something (I think she's 24)...well I'll stop before I give anything away. This book scared me with its realism (although I'm sure that was unintentional) mainly because Dawn spends over a year after college searching for employment. However what I love about Dawn is that she gets discouraged. She's not eternally optimistic (which I find unrealistic) nor is she downright pessimistic but her good nature wavers a few times, as is her right as a struggling writer recently graduated from college. Her ex-boyfriend is making everything harder for everyone by refusing to extract himself from her life and this is a storyline I found genuine. It's hard to know how involved to be in an ex's life-especially if you still want to be friends-or at least not be awkward. I really enjoyed reading the profiles of all the various women, is kind of an easy way to impart wisdom upon your readers but the advice was always delivered in an interesting, conversational manner.

Another quintessential beach-read with some authentic life complications that aren't easily laughed off or brushed aside, Dawn's resilience shines through as does the power of mentors, especially female mentors.

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### **Jackie Lane says**

What a wonderful book by a debut author.

Ten Girls to Watch: A Novel by Charity Shumway was totally unexpected. I was expecting more of a beach

read and when I began it and realized it was not going to be a beach read, I was surprised.

This is a story of growing up and lessons learned. Dawn is struggling with all aspects of her life and she gets a chance from the unlikeliest of people, her ex-boyfriend's girlfriend introduces her to Regina, editor of Charm Magazine and this chance meeting turns into a freelance job for her. She is to track down the prior Ten Girls to Watch from the last 50 years and at the end there will be a 50th Anniversary Party.

Dawn is relegated to the archives building and given an office which is nothing more than a closet. She begins the process of finding past TGTW women. She gets them to talk freely to her and she enjoys what she is doing. She is given advice from most all of the women on how to do things or what not to do.

Dawn is living in a crummy apartment, with a slob for a roommate and barely making ends meet.

(view spoiler)

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### Stormy says

There are quite a few things I really liked about Ten Girls to Watch. I like Dawn as a character. She's believable and honestly, quite similar to me. She has a dream that she's working towards, but she's not an instant success story, which is something that I loved. So often you'll read a story where the main character is a struggling, aspiring actress or writer or singer or what-have-you, but by the end of the novel they have a record deal or have written a book or have become really well-off. Dawn definitely leaves the story in a better place than when she started, but it's not like she went from online writer to magazine editor-in-chief in a year.

I liked seeing all the different women that Dawn interviews for the Ten Girls to Watch feature. It really highlights how many different ways there are to be inspiring and be successful. One of the women was a first grade teacher for forty years; another wrote a novel, and both of those are celebrated as achievements, as well as many others. In many ways, this book is all about celebrating success—but not the type of narrowly defined success we normally see. You're a politician? Success. You've been happily married for thirty years? Success.

However, there were a few things I didn't enjoy. There's a few love interests, none of which take up that much page time, but none of them caught my interest. None of them were terrible human beings by any means, but they weren't particularly interesting either, and I found myself bored during the time when Dawn was really concentrating on a guy, which might have been while the middle of this book dragged for me a little. The book's pacing seemed a little off; I could have done with some more complications in the middle and less towards the end. However, neither of these complaints severely hindered my lack of enjoyment in the novel.

**Final Impression:** An enjoyable read with a character whose story line is both compelling and realistic. Though there were a few minor issues with this book, especially in the middle, this is still a book I would highly recommend, especially since it focuses on the year post-college graduation, which I wish to see more of in books. I particularly like how this book celebrates achievements. A (strong) 3/5 stars.

Originally reviewed on my blog Book.Blog.Bake.

