


# Spark

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The local Avery Theater was just a run-down building to Quin—until her mother told her the tragic love story of Nick and Emma that played out on the theater’s stage all those years ago. Quin is convinced it’s the perfect story to rewrite for her drama class, but when she goes searching for more information, she makes a startling discovery—the Avery is rapidly regaining its former splendor and setting the stage for her classmates Dylan and Cass to relive Nick and Emma’s romance. Quin can see the spark between them, but it’s up to her to make sure her friends—and the Avery—can both be saved this time around.

## Spark Details

Date : Published May 17th 2016 by HarperTeen

ISBN : 9780062220233

Author : Holly Schindler

Format : Hardcover 304 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Romance, Contemporary, Fantasy, Magical Realism

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# From Reader Review Spark for online ebook

## Kelly Gunderman says

Check out this and other reviews on my young adult book blog, Here's to Happy Endings!

*“There is real, undeniable magic in this world – all around us.”*

I haven't read a lot of books that deal with theater or performing arts, but the ones that I do read I tend to like. They're always different than your usual contemporary novel, because they tend to have a certain life to them that makes the novel shine. **In the case of *Spark*, by Holly Schindler, there is plenty of life to be found within the pages!**

Quin has grown up with her adoptive mother, who always spoke about the town's old theater – The Avery – as if it was once alive. Until a tragedy struck that caused the owner to close down the theater, in which case her mother says the “The Avery died” when she refers to it. Never really understanding why her mother talked about the old theater as if it were a living, breathing thing, Quin just figured her mother really enjoyed theater and acting – after all, her mother did spend some of her childhood in that theater before it closed, and she's teaching the drama class as a substitute this year.

**When Quin's mother decides to have the class put on a play of *Anything Goes* to raise money to save The Avery from being destroyed (and restore it to its former glory), the drama class is curious – until it turns out that Quin's mother has given everyone a task that pretty much makes them face their fears.** For Quin, it's having to get up and tell everyone what to do, because she's the director. For Quin's best friend, she will be the lead – but that terrifies her, because due to a birthmark that covers the side of her face, she tries to stay out of the spotlight. And another boy who has a speech issue and tries to keep to himself has been made the music director. No one is thrilled with the way Quin's mother wants to run the play, especially with Quin as the director.

However, when strange sounds and lights start appearing to Quin (from The Avery), she starts to wonder if maybe there was a little bit more to the old theater than she had grown up believing. Maybe magic is real, after all.

*“It's true. The Avery's heart is beating. The theater is breathing. The Avery's alive.”*

As Quin and her friends come to understand that despite the horrible tragedy that occurred in The Avery decades before they were even born, they also come to understand that maybe there really is some magic in the world – and that maybe Quin's mother was right – maybe The Avery really is alive, and it was just waiting for someone who loved it enough to come back and make it whole again. And maybe if Quin and her drama class can manage to put the play together in time, they will be able to save the theater that was once the center of their town, and make it the hot spot that it used to be.

Spark is a well written novel that will delight fans of theater and those who aren't that big of theater fans. Quin's character was enjoyable and easy enough to click with, and the mystery she sets out to solve about her background add a little more fun to the story. While the side characters are just a little bit quiet and don't have as much personality as the main character, I still enjoyed reading about their time in The Avery. **The supernatural/magical aspects that accompany the theater really made the book shine with originality.**

**I really enjoyed this book. It was a fun, quick read with an air of magic, mystery, and a small town's history that really blended well together and created a nice, charming book that will sweep you off your feet and have you believing that magic is definitely real!**

**Note:** I received an eARC of this book from the publisher via Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Sarah says**

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

*“Starting now, it's up to me to figure out what the skies are trying to say.”*

This was a YA magical-realism story, about an old theatre.

Quin was an girl who truly believed in the magic of the Avery theatre, and showed real determination in trying to restore it to what it once was, even when she was put in a tough position as director of the play they were holding.

The storyline in this was about Quin and her drama class putting on a production in hope that they could raise money to save the old theatre, and we also got some magical realism as the theatre transformed itself and those inside it. We also got a little bit of romance in the form of two members of the cast reliving a past romance that had happened at the theatre, in a star-crossed lovers kind of way.

The ending to this was okay, and things ended happily enough.

6 out of 10

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### **Louisa says**

This book was really great to read! I loved the idea of using the weather to predict the future, that it could influence the future! Loved the love story, it was really great to have a book where the main character wasn't the one falling in love!

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### **Ruthsic says**

*The local Avery Theater was just a run-down building to Quin—until her mother told her the tragic love story of Nick and Emma that played out on the theater's stage all those years ago. Quin is convinced it's the perfect story to rewrite for her drama class, but when she goes searching for more information, she makes a*

*startling discovery—the Avery is rapidly regaining its former splendor and setting the stage for her classmates Dylan and Cass to relive Nick and Emma’s romance. Quin can see the spark between them, but it’s up to her to make sure her friends—and the Avery—can both be saved this time around.*

I first thought *Spark* was a contemporary romance, but it is more of a supernatural book, about reviving a past through a star-crossed love. Quin's mother has been trying to get the local theatre Avery to not be torn down, and since she is also their drama teacher, has made the Advanced Drama class of the school to put on Avery's last play to raise funds. Quin, for her part, loves the bedtime story she was brought up on - the story of Emma and Nick, who died on the stage of the Avery in 1947. So now, being made the director of the play she is put to the task to get her reluctant classmates to bring about a miracle - to put on a play that won't, at the very least, embarrass them. Worse is the fact that they have mostly been put into roles they don't want - like her best friend Cass, who wishes to stay out of the spotlight due to the huge birthmark on her face, but has been cast as the lead, or the quiet stuttering loner Dylan, who has been made the music director.

But what Quin doesn't expect is the fact of the two of them, Cass and Dylan, coming together and continuing the story of the lovers from before. With them, the magic of the theatre has come alive, as was foretold by Quin's own great grandmother. So, while she and Cass are hiding the secret of the magic of the theater, events are unfolding to show Quin the past. The writing I found to be descriptive in a way that brought the magic of seeing it along with it, a story unfolding in the mind just like how it was being shown to Quin. The magic itself isn't really explained, though, which was a let-down for me. Everybody just sees it and goes along with it - like an entire town - and nobody questions whether some hallucinogen got into their water supply. And any plot hole was explained away by magic. That ending was good, though, and brought a nice conclusion to the story. In summation, I found it to be an interesting story, but felt a lot of details were skimmed over.

*Received a free galley from HarperTeen, via Edelweiss, in exchange for an honest review.*

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### **Ashley (Bookaholics Anonymous) says**

review to come.

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### **Sophia (Bookworming Thoughts) says**

*I received this book for free from Publisher in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.*

*Spark* has such an awkward tension at the beginning, but it is so worth the reading in order to see all of the characters grow by the end of the story. All of the characters in the Advanced Drama class - Quin, Dylan, Cass - are considered to be outsiders compared to their classmates at Verona High. But when Quin's mother decides to revive the old Avery Theater, Quin and her drama class members are all placed in roles they aren't actually comfortable with.

Overall, I love the magic Schindler weaves into her latest book, blending fantasy and contemporary seamlessly and bringing theater to life.

This review was originally posted on Bookwyrming Thoughts

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### **Suze Lavender says**

Quin and her friends aren't popular. Quin writes, but doesn't share her work with anybody and doesn't want to be noticed. Her best friend Cass has a big mole in her face and their friend Dylan stutters. Quin's mother is their drama teacher and wants the class to give a performance to save the Avery, a once gorgeous old theater in town. Now it's dilapidated because nobody ever set foot in it anymore after the death of two young people, Emma and Nick. Quin is fascinated by the theater and by their story. She is the director of the play and she has to come up with a way to make their class shine instead of stumble, so they won't make fools of themselves.

The Avery is a magical place. Quin feels it straight away when she enters the building. It transforms Dylan and Cass. There they can be themselves. The theater shows Quin two different love stories with many similarities and real sparks. It's up to her to save everyone, but that isn't an easy task...

Spark is set in a small town that has a splendid theater. The Avery used to be grand, but now it's forgotten. When Quin and her friends enter the building it magically comes to life again. I'm a big fan of the theater and therefore loved this story from the first sentence. Holly Schindler's descriptions are detailed and vivid, I could easily picture the theater and the two love stories that are taking place. There's a combination of magic and romance that works very well. The love stories have an unusual aspect, because the narrator isn't the person who's falling in love. She's the person who watches them, which is a fantastic idea for a story that's all about performing in front of an audience. Quin is an excellent observer and it was fabulous to see what was happening on stage through her eyes. It's a remarkable construction and I think it's an amazing one.

I enjoy reading Magical Realism and was immediately enchanted by this story. Holly Schindler's sentences are beautiful. Her story reads like a fairytale. The first stages of rehearsing bring chaos and writing a play while practicing is a process that happens by trial and error. Holly Schindler uses that messiness to her advantage by making the reader feel it while she's still in control of the level of disorder. That is something else I really enjoyed about this book. I loved the author's creativity. The ending is magical and as wonderful as I hoped it would be. Spark is a brilliant unusual story.

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### **Julie Graves says**

This is Verona High's senior project nightmare! Quin's mom is the substitute drama teacher and she has assigned the play "Anything Goes" as the senior project. But this cast is full of misfits and those hiding from the limelight. Add to that a dying town, a magical theater and a story that is aching to be told and maybe, just maybe, Quin's mom and Quin can help bring a spark back to the old town square of Verona.

I loved SPARK! I love old buildings that have personalities of their own, underdogs that save the day, and pasts colliding with the present. All of those elements make up the story in Spark and it was magical for me! The cast of characters was great! The Avery theater(because yes, this theater is a character unto itself!) brought life back to the town of Verona after it's spark seemed to go out. Quin and her connection to the past and her glimpses into the tragedy that caused the Avery to close. Quin's friends Cass, with her unsightly birthmark, and Dylan with his impossible stutter and even Quin's mom who was a part of the past, all were perfectly portrayed and endearing. I enjoyed every moment of the story and highly recommend it!

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### **Tee loves Kyle Jacobson says**

Okay where to start with this book..... I was a little weary starting this book because I wasn't sure if I wanted to read it or not but there is something about the theater that I love. I started reading it and it was slow in the beginning and I stopped and started a few times before I really could get into it. With that said I did enjoy the book but there was something missing I am just not sure what it was so I decided to finish it and I was glad I did.

Quin is a great character. She can be a little quirky at times but for the most part she was funny. She loves The Avery Theater and one day her mother decides to tell her of the tragic love story of Nick and Emma. Once her mother is done telling the story Quin wants to resurrect the Avery. As she is contemplating what to write for her English class her dream is coming true.

The Avery is coming back to life and her classmates Dylan and Cass are going to be playing Nick and Emma. Will the story repeat itself or will Dylan and Cass set a new era for the Avery.....

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### **Danielle (Love at First Page) says**

Nah, not my thing.

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### **Cynthia says**

Must ready mystery with a Spark of magic. Holly Schindler captures the vibe of small town life and those who live anything but small lives. You will never look at an abandoned theater on a Main Street the same again. What secrets does it keep? And how long will it wait to share secrets with someone who understands it's magic. Add in a mysterious diary with shifting words and thoughts, and it's a whirlwind ride with no wind.....just a spark of lightning.

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### **Brittany (The Book Addict's Guide/Novelly Yours) says**

I wouldn't really mark this as a DNF since I didn't make it too far but I could just tell that this really wasn't the book for me. The first chapter seemed a bit pieced together, especially to kick off the book, and I was sort of confused at what was going on. I would have much rather gotten to know the characters first before being thrown into a confusing dream sequence.

A few chapters later and I was still struggling with the writing. I tried to forge ahead a bit more but it was difficult and I wasn't really into this magical realism of the theater. It wasn't quite what I was expecting so I think I'll pass on this one for now.

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## **Dark Faerie Tales says**

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: This is an adorable magical realism novel that is ultimately a love letter to the theater.

Opening Sentence: When I dream, it's always on a screen.

The Review:

Going into this book, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. The premise sounded intriguing but contemporary novels are usually hit or miss with me. However, this one was the perfect mix of contemporary and magical realism. Plus, there wasn't a romance for the main character, which was different and refreshing.

This story combined mystery, romance, and high school to create an engaging tale. After setting the stage through an introduction to the town, the history of the Avery, and introducing the main characters, the story begins when the drama teacher, who also happens to be Quin's mom, announces that the senior project will be the play *Anything Goes*. From there, this coming of age tale shows how people can find themselves, sometimes in the unlikeliest of ways (and with the help of a little magic). The author manages to truly capture the essence of small-town life.

There were definite *Romeo and Juliet* influences on this story and they worked out surprisingly well. I was a little unclear on how Cass and Dylan, the main romantic couple, were star-crossed but I loved Emma and Nick's story. Told in bits and pieces through flashbacks, the mystery of who they were and what happened the night they died kept me interested throughout the entire novel. Each new flashback peeled back an additional layer or showed another dimension of the story. I actually felt as if this story-telling style allowed me to understand this story within the story at a deeper level than if the author had just told it from beginning to end.

I enjoyed the part of the story that was set in the modern day as well. Quin, Cass, and Dylan were all likable characters and it was a joy to watch them grow throughout the novel. However, I wasn't a huge fan of the fact that Cass and Dylan flourished mostly when their flaws were taken away. I understand what the author was aiming for but I wish that both characters exhibited the same confidence and self-assuredness while encompassed by the Avery's magic in the outside world. I would have liked them to succeed because they fully accepted themselves and each other. Other than that, I really enjoyed the characters and the story, particularly the ending.

Ultimately, this was a love letter to the magic of the theater. This was also an adorable, quick read that would be perfect for summer (or if you need a reminder to look for the magic in everyday life).

Notable Scene:



And suddenly, I'm thinking of that bedtime story—the one that has followed me into my dreams for years. I'm remembering Mom telling me that the Avery died. On the night of Emma's and Nick's tragic ending. I remember her reciting what Bertie'd told her that night: When the right hearts come to the Avery . . . the Avery will come back from the dead.

It's true. The Avery's heart is beating. The theater is breathing.

The Avery's alive.

I swivel the beam of my flashlight toward the stage, where I no longer see the old half-fallen set, but pristine velvet curtains. Panting in a kind of confused anticipation, I stare as the curtains slowly part. A projector pops to life behind me, washing a bright light across a movie screen. Bold, black letters hover, announcing that the scene about to play takes place on June 4, 1947. And the sound of a train whistle fills the theater.

FTC Advisory: HarperTeen provided me with a copy of Spark. No goody bags, sponsorships, “material connections,” or bribes were exchanged for my review.

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### **Kathy Martin says**

This was a fascinating contemporary story with just a touch of magic. Quin is a pretty normal high school senior. She likes being average and fading into the crowd. When her drama class is tasked by her teacher - who also happens to be her mother - to recreate the production of *Anything Goes* in order to save the local theater from destruction, Quin finds herself mixed up in something big.

Her best friend Cass is to star. Cass has a marvelous voice that no one knows about because of her self-consciousness about the port wine birthmark on her face. The musical director is Derek who has a severe stutter. And Quin is set as director over them and the crowd of misfits who make up her Drama class.

Quin has always dreamed about the Avery, the theater they are trying to save, because it featured largely in the bedtime stories her mother told her. There was a tragedy there when her mother was young that left two star-crossed lovers dead on the stage. Ever since her mother has had a goal to reinvigorate the theater and the crumbling square around it.

We see what happened in the past through Quin's vivid imagination - or maybe magical intervention - and see the parallels between the past and what is happening now. And we watch the kids grow and change in ways they never expected as they work on this theater production.

Theater buffs and fans of star-crossed romance would be the perfect audience for this engaging story.

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### **Hanna Fogel says**

Thanks to Edelweiss and HarperTeen for the ARC! 3.5 stars.

I had to think about how to review this one, because magical realism can be a bit hit-or-miss for me, and I found that in some places I was having more trouble suspending my disbelief. But I liked the book more as it

went on, and having been to small Midwest towns I can picture the Verona square pretty easily, which I think also helped.

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