

Doctor Lovebeads

Gary Reilly

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A smart-alecky cab driver makes for a pathetic yet empathetic protagonist in this goofy book in a series.

Doctor Lovebeads is the fifth novel in the Asphalt Warrior series penned by the late Gary Reilly and, although it has its flaws, the book leaves the reader wanting to experience others in the series. Reilly is an entertaining writer whose life ended before he completely developed his craft.

Doctor Lovebeads features a Denver cab driver known simply as Murph. Reilly does not put much of Murph's life on display in this volume. He lives alone, has no apparent social life, and his only contact with people other than his taxi fares are primarily other taxi drivers. Murph works, watches television, drinks beer, and ruminates about writing novels.

Murph has one major rule: do not get involved in the lives of the folks who ride in his cab. He rarely follows this rule, however; *Doctor Lovebeads* is taken up with Murph trying to rescue two runaway girls he met in his cab from a hippie cult. Along the way, the cabbie divests himself of an ongoing stream of chatter, commenting on life as he knows it and anything else that pops into his head.

Reilly's lead character is a self-styled smart aleck whose disdain for the regular world is often too apparent. He believes that only saps diligently work full time. Murph is also striving mightily to justify his life. He is clearly frustrated with his inability to get a novel published. By getting involved in the lives of his fares, he gives meaning to his otherwise pathetic life.

This is a quiet book in that the plot rolls along pleasantly, much like Murph's cab. Reilly offers a detailed street-by-street description of Denver that will be of interest to anyone familiar with the city; otherwise, it is a laundry list of names that could be from anywhere.

Reilly's genius lies in his ability to create a real, three-dimensional person out of disparate descriptions and monologues strewn throughout the story. In a way, though, it is not these "facts" that fully describe Murph. Rather, it is the breezy, almost constant running commentary on all that happens or has happened in his life that brings Murph alive on the page.

Reading *Doctor Lovebeads* is like reading the script of a documentary on the life of a Denver cab driver. It would not make for an action movie, but it is a good story.

JOHN SENGER (Spring 2014)

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