



Dogs Aren't Men

Billi Tiner

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Tiner blends humor and tenderness with a skillful literary hand.

Harlequin-romance tradition meets contemporary intrigue in a heartwarming novel that brings out the best in both genres. *Dogs Aren't Men* blends humor and tenderness with a skillful literary hand. An underlying element of danger enhances the tension in a quaint small town inhabited by a few undesirable saboteurs. This sweet romance features an ambitious veterinarian with no patience for demanding men until she meets an emergency room doctor who shares her lack of enthusiasm about relationships.

Dr. Rebecca Miller is intelligent, outspoken, and in control of her successful career as owner of Animal Friends Veterinary Clinic. She finds her sense of purpose in caring for the countless creatures who enter her life daily, and has formed her strongest bond with her loyal dog, Captain. Derrick Peterson, a stressed hospital physician, competes for Rebecca's affection, while his best friend stands in the wings as an analyzing sidekick. The story unfolds as a predictable dating scenario that questions the real meaning of love, especially when a stalker threatens Rebecca's safety at the clinic. In a manner that is modern yet stereotypically familiar, Rebecca resists any situation that may cause disruption to her contented existence; this logical aversion sparks interest but lacks ingenuity.

The occasional trite description ("She devoured the tub of ice cream") bogs down what is otherwise an excellent portrayal of an educated woman. And male introspection that conveys less sophistication than is typical of Derek's character leaves a false impression of him: "He'd never set out with the intention of wooing a woman before. He had no idea how to go about it. He began to hum along to the music on his radio as the last remnants of the wall he'd built around his heart fell away."

Without question, the story offers well-developed characters placed in a realistic environment, even though the glossed-over love scenes may have benefited from a bit more action. Rebecca and Derrick are set against the backdrop of their careers, revealing the personality traits that drove their successes. Their relationship develops slowly, a natural progression of events. The plot is meticulously implemented, sustaining one's page-turning impulse throughout the book. Garnering respect as well as admiration, this stellar heroine's only apparent flaw is her tendency to ignore her own needs.

Tiner knows how to write engagingly for a popular niche genre, while establishing a sense of place in an active American community and infusing the story with a feeling of immediacy. She incorporates her expertise as a veterinarian and explores several compelling avenues, bringing her profession vividly to life through her portrayal of Rebecca.

Dogs Aren't Men is a commendable opening for a trilogy that will delight pet enthusiasts and draw in dedicated romance readers. Witty and amusing, Tiner's concise, appealing style shows potential for attracting a lifetime following.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (May 23, 2014)

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