



Every Day Needs A Dog

Billi Tiner

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Both a mystery and a romance, this story is perfect for pet lovers.

Every Day Needs a Dog, by Billi Tiner, is a mystery novel for animal lovers and a unique take on the romance and thriller genres, with its unorthodox setting—a busy and successful animal shelter. It's a book that seems familiar at first, but while it gives a little too much away too soon, resulting in a climax that has a lesser impact than it could, it offers enough surprises and twists to be engaging, suspenseful, and very entertaining.

Freshly fired from a high-powered corporate gig in a big city and desperate for work, Elizabeth Fischer is recruited to become the president of small town Spring Valley's animal shelter. While at first convinced she is out of her element, Elizabeth soon discovers an affinity for the animals and a deep respect for the staff and volunteers that make the place tick, and she must decide if that's worth both the pay cut and the ego hit she'd have to take to stay there. Despite her better judgment, she falls for a charismatic veterinarian, but her feelings are muddled as she gradually gets to know Paul, a gruff volunteer dog walker whose fiancée recently died. Her new life is further complicated by the presence of someone she increasingly fears is a stalker, and an organized crime ring whose fighting dogs are rescued and brought to the shelter for care but who won't let them go without a fight of their own.

While it contains both mystery and romance elements, the novel is, at its heart, a testament to the deep bonds formed between animals and their humans, and therein lies its greatest strength. Tiner, a veterinarian herself, skillfully describes the way these kinds of relationships evolve, and she gives animals, particularly the "troubled" ones, a dignified presence in the book. The book treats human foibles with similar compassion, including Elizabeth's rush to categorize and judge the new people she meets in Spring Valley and Paul's messy processing of his grief. Though he is perhaps given the White Knight role once or twice too often, Paul is generally an effective foil for Elizabeth, as he challenges her to identify and work on her own prejudices and to discover elements of both herself and of a more community-oriented lifestyle that she didn't know she could enjoy.

The story's most dramatic events sometimes suffer from too little development or from inexplicable outcomes, such as when a family whose previous pet died in their care is given another despite the patriarch violently threatening shelter workers. A key mystery is quickly explained away at the end of the book, which leaves the wrap-up feeling a little rushed compared to the well-paced unfurling of the rest of the story. And while the epilogue eventually ties things up neatly, it begins awkwardly as it veers away from narrative and into summary, explaining rather than showing the results of some of the story's main plot points.

Pet lovers looking for a quick, well-paced, and suspenseful read will appreciate *Every Day Needs a Dog*.

SARAH STEWART (July 15, 2014)

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