

Touched in the Dark: A Dr. Tori Novel

Dr. Jennifer Hanes

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Realistic and detailed, this story explores the psyche of a woman fighting to come to terms with her difficult upbringing while advancing in a fast-paced career.

A gifted woman collides with the chief of trauma surgery in a passionate liaison. This supercharged medical romance features a young intern seeking abiding love and the calm resolution of a tormented past—a childhood tainted by sexual abuse. In a break from tradition, the character of Dr. Tori Taggert replaces the stereotypical infatuated nurse who succumbs to the advances of a powerful physician, providing a fresh take on the popular hospital setting.

This second installment of a series explores the psyche of a woman fighting to come to terms with her damaged upbringing while advancing in a stressful career. Realistic and detailed, every emergency crisis is vivid, allowing those unfamiliar with the environment to experience the stress that doctors must endure. Educational as well as entertaining, albeit morbidly, the story grabs attention but at times focuses on medical details at the expense of plot.

Though professional terminology and hospital slang are essential to the background and mood of this novel, the narrative veers into overload occasionally, exposing the grittier aspects of practicing medicine for the sake of authenticity in descriptions and dialogue. In one instance, an attending doctor states, “Well, with blood in both gutters he likely has a lacerated spleen or a lacerated liver or both. True, those typically don’t need surgery, but even with fluid replacement his vital signs are unstable, indicating he’ll need some cold hard steel to correct the problem.”

Medical advice at the end of the book discusses various situations addressed in the fictional emergency room as well as the average doctor’s office, such as drug overdose, death of a loved one, and care for newborns. This material is superfluous and may be best placed in a self-help book.

In this novel, Dr. Jennifer Hanes appears to be crafting an ongoing series by utilizing the natural progression of events within this medical setting, which even includes a stalker. In this scene, an intruder prepares to assault Dr. Tori: “He set his beer on the nightstand and reached across the bed. I was lying on my left side, with my right arm over my head, so I could see his movements without letting him see my eyes. I could see his left hand moving toward me. It took all my courage to keep from vomiting or screaming.”

Hanes fluctuates between lighthearted romantic interludes, steamy sex, and serious emotional trauma in a manner that may have a jarring effect on those expecting a straightforward relationship without complications during or after love play. Her experience as an emergency physician has enhanced this well-constructed novel, lending a realism to the writing that an author outside her profession would not be able to achieve. This knowledge benefits the book overall, but it may detract from the story in certain scenes.

The popular premise of *Touched in the Dark* will appeal to an established audience that enjoys the private lives of medical personnel.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (January 23, 2014)

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