

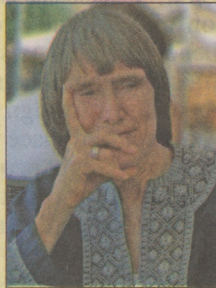
A Vermont Rom-Com

"The Treehouse on Dog River Road"

Catherine Drake, She Writes Press, 2022

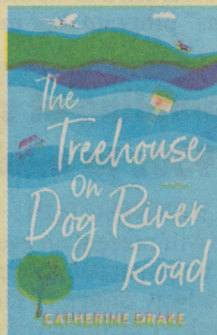
Hannah Spencer has never been really happy with her job at a Boston firm, so when it merges with a larger company, she has taken the opportunity to be laid off. With enough money to last her for a few months, she is determined to find not just another job, but one that will enable her to do something positive for people. Just what that job would be, she doesn't know, but she has resolved to think about it over the summer. She plans to spend that summer in Vermont, tending her sister Molly's two children, while Molly and her husband Ted go to Patagonia to do environmental research. The two kids—Nora, 6, whose fantasies are filled with castles, princes and weddings, and Owen, 4, whose imaginative life revolves around his fleet of toy trucks—are cute, affectionate, and reasonably well-behaved. What's more, they go to day camp every week day, so Hannah knows she will have time to re-plan her life.

As Hannah establishes herself in Molly and Ted's house, she notices that a man is moving into the house next door, with the help of his friends and family. His name is Nathan Wild, an IT specialist with a large, friendly dog named Cooper. Gradually, with many clandestine looks from different vantage points, the two find that they are both single, both attractive, and both good with kids and dogs. That might be all they found out, except that Hannah, who spent a year building houses for Habitat for



One-Minute Book Reviews

Laura Stevenson



Humanity in Kenya, looks at the lovely maple tree in Molly's yard and decides to build the kids a tree house. The guys at the lumber store tell her that it's polite to warn neighbors that a structure is going to change their view, so Hannah talks to Nathan about it. He approves, and later gives her a hand with the heavy lifting when she reaches that point. As the summer draws on and the treehouse progresses, so does the romance—but Hannah, who is looking into some really interesting jobs out west, tends to brush the relationship off as a summer fling. What will happen?

There really can't be much doubt, despite the problems Catherine Drake carefully throws in the couple's way to keep her book from becoming Instagram come true. Cumulatively, the problems take up more space than the inevitable ending requires, but this is not a book one reads for its plot. It's a people book, and its characters are convincingly portrayed and uniformly delightful. Both Hannah and Nathan come from warm, loving professional families who, like the reader, quickly see that these two twenty-somethings are made for each other. The women, all professionals who have successfully juggled children and careers, are intelligent, caring, and supportive; the men are kind and helpful. The family members all help each other out, but don't intrude or interfere. The Vermont they inhabit is beautiful and well described. And Nora and Owen, the recipients of the treehouse, are spot-on charming and believable. Come summer, this will be a book for the beach and the hammock, and intelligent young professional women will have a tremendously good time reading it.