



## Black Dog

*Cat Grant*

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Which dog wins? The one you feed.

Danny Bannon and Eddie Roscoe have been fighting, in and out of the ring, for more than fifteen years. Mutual attraction and small-town ties hold them together, yet they're haunted by a shared tragedy that still hangs between them.

Their tenuous, on-again off-again relationship takes a hard right cross with the arrival of Tom Delaney, a teen on the run from his punch-happy father. In no time, the kid shows himself to be a boxing prodigy.

But Tom's politically influential father isn't yet down for the count. When his mother shows up at Eddie's diner with a shiner and a haunted look in her eyes, Tom is hopeful for her future. But when that hope is snuffed out, Tom's rage has him ready to turn his new fighting skills to a deadly purpose. Revenge, or die trying.

Unless his surrogate big brothers can put their painful past behind them to keep history from rising up for another round.

This book has been previously published.

Warning: Tough guys with a long history beating the crap out of each other to avoid saying "I love you". Heaps of sexual tension. More angst and emotion than deemed safe by the Surgeon General. Proceed with caution!

## **Black Dog Details**

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Author : Cat Grant

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## From Reader Review Black Dog for online ebook

**SueC says**

**3.5\***

**So what do you think I said when I heard there was a book up for review about boxers?**

**"LET'S GET READY TO RUUUUMMMMBLLEEEEEE!"\***

I was so damned excited that I think I became a little punch drunk.\*

I should point out that this story isn't really about boxing per se, the sport is Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and that only added to the enjoyment of the story. There is grappling and ground fighting between sweaty, fit and strong men...need I say more?

That said, let's get down to business.

The first thing that struck me was the style of writing. It felt reminiscent of an old Bogart movie or some old comic where the narrative was dark and heavy with an air of skepticism. It's fast paced, funny, gritty and quite often very touching. Dare I say it hooked\* me in straight away.

Next, this story hit me below the belt.\* I think I was in heat for approximately 80% of the book 'cause lord have mercy, I was on FIRE! I was down for the count,\* on the ropes\*... I needed someone in my corner\* cause dammit - it was incredibly sexy. The descriptions of these skilled men while grappling for each other was bloody(!) brilliant. Indulge me for a minute... I'm thinking (dreaming) of Tom Hardy and Eddie Redmayne wrestling and licking and playing and well, you get where I'm headed right? And jeezus chrai one of 'ems a ginger. It was Off. The. Charts. Hot.

It's not all sexy groans and body slams though. There are struggles of the emotional kind. A push and pull between three characters (no ménage) who understand each other implicitly. They have bridges to build and get over. They have opportunities to 'pay it forward' and they even get a shot at their own redemption.

Each of the characters were likeable but I really didn't get a sense of knowing the characters incredibly well. Maybe I'm asking too much from 130 pages. Maybe my expectations were too high, or maybe I just wanted MORE.

So now the gloves are off.\* My biggest bone of contention was in the alternating point of view. It was difficult to decipher who's point of view I was experiencing for a few paragraphs. Going back and rereading was frustrating and threw me off course. It was a low blow\* but it didn't make me want to throw in the towel\*. In fact I won't hesitate to read the next book in the Bannon's Gym series.

\*Denotes boxing idioms. FYI, there were 8 in total. I'm such a lightweight!\*. Make that 9.

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## **Ariadna says**

This is the story of Eddie, a guy who co-runs his family's diner with his mom. An ex-Marine (who also went to seminary at one point), Eddie keeps a very low-key existence. He's got an on and off thing with his childhood friend Danny (who owns a boxing gym). Their relationship, however, is complicated by a tragedy that occurred when they were both teenagers.

In comes Tom, a young runaway with a natural talent for fighting. Wary, queer, and carrying a lot of scars (mental and some physical), Tom becomes Danny's protegee at the gym.

The story features dudes with a LOT of baggage, some very tender and sexy-sweet moments, and MMA fighting talk.

I bought this book one day when it was on special for 99c. FTR, I tend to avoid novellas because I like lengthier books, but the narrative pulled me in. The characters had great dynamics and I even liked the fighting scenes! There is a bit of narrative shift because all of Eddie's chapters are in 1st person while Tom and Eddie's are in 3rd limited.

From what I know, the 2nd book will focus on Tom while the 3rd will be about someone who is a background character in book 1. I was thoroughly (and happily) surprised by how much I enjoyed this book.

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## **?♥? Michaelle ☙♥? says**

4 Stars

I picked this mainly because it was relatively short and I needed a sport-themed book for a challenge. Well, imagine my surprise when I found myself actually liking the story quite a LOT.

Despite the length, we get a lot of characterization for not just 2 MCs but also an additional character, Tom. Loved the emotional turmoil, the angst and guilt, the pain and fear. Made the resolution that much more enjoyable.

That said, I really wish there'd been more explanation for Eddie joining the Seminary & later the Marines. Reading between the lines could lead the reader to think it was guilt and self-hatred...but I would have liked to *read* that, "hear" it from Eddie, maybe explaining to Danny, why he left.

I'm hoping more of that will come out in the subsequent novellas...

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## **Thomaidha Papa says**

4 Hearts

Review written for MM Good Book Reviews

What a peculiar book this one was. I think if someone would read my mind about what I like in a contemporary romance this would be the result.

Here we have a book that has not one or two, but three main characters – and no it's not a threesome. Danny and Eddie are in their thirties. They've been friends, they've been lovers, they share a past that haunts them for fifteen years. As much as they love each other – that is a given here, there is no search for love or romance – they cannot reconcile with the pain their relationship has given them in the past. A ghost stands in between them, a memory so strong that every time they get together, their resulting break up gets stronger and the aftermath more painful.

Each tries to amend on their own, Danny turning to drinking himself stupid, becoming more and more the person he mostly hates, and Eddie trying to save the world while wallowing in a pit of guilt.

In the picture comes Tom, a homeless kid Eddie finds around his diner and decides to do what he's known for, help him stand on his feet. Tom is a frightened kid marred by abuse, but his will to prevail is so strong, it's downright scary. Between Danny and Eddie they manage to create a fighter out of Tom, give him confidence and tools to get on his life without having to look around his shoulders like a scared rabbit every time. Add in the mixture the mother figure of Gloria and the kid gets a bit more than he ever expected, love and a semblance of a normal family. Until his real mother shows up and everything shatters once again.

I really, really loved this book. It had this incredible balance between love and friendship, pain and hurt. The evil of the story was bad enough to want to make you kill him yourself, yet he still maintain such a wonderful grasp with reality, not being overwhelming and not engaging in incredulous actions. His profiling was simply perfect for me.

The abusive past and the pain that came were also very well balanced. The author showcased the horrors of everyday living in an abusive family without making it overbearing for the reader. The character's emotions were enough to grip you without dragging you into darkness.

As for the blend of the romantic plot with the action part, you have a clear view of two stories moving in parallel, or should I say three, as there is the story between Danny and Eddie that origins from back fifteen years, there is the story of all three characters together as they move on, and there is the underlying romance between Eddie and Dannie that gets stronger the more they focus together into helping Tom. It was fantastic, one feeding the other and ending in the inevitable with such smoothness.

I the end I was left with a most enjoyable read that entertained and challenged me at the same time. However this book felt as a standalone and I'm curious what the author will do with the next one? Will this trio continue or is it going to be Dannie and Eddie with a new charge? Will it be two completely different characters in the same setting? Normally I get a pretty clear idea from a series as to what to expect next, but this time I'm wondering, and that's what makes it even more intriguing.

As for this one, if you like strong characters, men who fight through their ugly and persist when things seem to be hopeless in a very realistic setting, and a romance that comes effortlessly without dragging the main plot under it, then this is definitely a book you will want to read. Strongly recommended!

Tommie

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### **Christy says**

This was a great short story with fabulous characters and an interesting plot. Since it's book one in a series,

I'm excited to read more when they are available. The concept of two men who share a history, albeit one fraught with tension, brought together in their care of a young homeless boy, caught and held my attention. The young man who comes from a lifetime of horrid abuse is struggling to survive and may have just found the people to help him live.

Eddie owns a diner, is an ex-Marine, ex-seminary student, ex-pro boxer, and, yeah, are you seeing the picture here? Eddie has spent the past fifteen years running, but he's home now, taking over the diner after his pop died. Danny owns Bannon's Gym, trains fighters, and has a past tied to Eddie's although neither one likes or wants to remember that. Tom is an abused, homeless runaway, whom Eddie gives a job and a place to sleep. As Danny says, Tom is another in a long line of boys Eddie is trying to save. Danny isn't much better, though, because he takes over training Tom in mixed martial arts guessing, correctly, that Tom's abuse is from his father.

Tom settles in and begins to make a new family with Eddie, Danny, and Gloria, Eddie's mom. Between work at the diner and heavy training at the gym, life settles into a routine. Even Eddie and Danny begin to get back to the friendship they had before disaster struck all those years before. When Tom's mom finds him and comes to see him at the diner, he's terrified his dad knows where he is, but his mom promises him she just wants to make sure he's okay before she leaves his father and goes somewhere his dad can't find her. Truer words were never spoken and now Eddie and Danny have the responsibility of dealing with the grievous repercussions.

I really liked this story, a lot. The writing was wonderful, the characters were all strong and well developed, and the plot was great. I highly recommend it and I'm looking forward to book two.

NOTE: This book was provided by the publisher for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews

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### **JustJen "Miss Conduct" says**

Really enjoyed this one. It's as much about Danny and Eddie and their relationship, or lack thereof, as it is about Tom and his life issues. I loved how Danny and Eddie (and Gloria) took Tom under their wings and made him a part of their family.

The guilt, etc. causing problems between Danny and Eddie seemed to drag on for so long, but I guess that was the point. They made a great match when they were both on the same page.

Another well-written, interesting and enjoyable read.

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### **Crystal Marie says**

I'm not usually a fan of MMA type books, however I decided that I was going to give this book a shot. And I am so glad that I did! Because while this book does have MMA talk happening in it, it's not just completely about that. There is more happening in the story and that is what brought me into it and made me want to

keep reading.

One of the main things that I loved about this book was the characters. They were so extremely detailed in everything about them, yet it wasn't overdone in the slightest. You were able to connect with everyone, no matter how minor of a role they seemed to have, they were all very important.

I do enjoy that both Danny and Eddie were very strong male characters. They knew what they wanted, but they also both fought for it. There were some times that I wanted to reach through the book and smack them because of how crazy they were both acting! But that is part of what made the story that much better. I also liked how completely different they were on the surface, but once you got to know them, you realized how completely alike they are.

This story is one that will teach you about love, and the different types of love there is. The battles that people face when they are faced with a difficult decision, do they give up on the love they know they want because of what others may think, or do they fight for it?

I completely recommend this book to anyone who is looking for an extremely heartfelt book that will keep your attention, and leave you wanting for more.

\*Copy provided for review\*

Reviewed by Crystal Marie for Crystal's Many Reviewers

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### **Ije the Devourer of Books says**

This story gives us two older main characters (Danny and Eddie) who have a shared history and a previous somewhat closeted relationship. They are estranged from each other but begin to get closer to each other when Eddie gives Tom (a young runaway) a job. Tom is interested in martial arts and boxing and starts training at Danny's gym. Eddie who is a retired boxer reluctantly agrees to coach Tom at the gym and the stalemate between Eddie and Danny eventually comes to an end. The two men find themselves drawn to one another once again as they work together to train and support Tom through some tragic circumstances.

The story is told from the perspective of all three men. I enjoyed the fact that the main characters are older men but I found the story a bit difficult to follow at times mostly because of the parts told from Tom's perspective. I felt that Tom was given too much focus and this watered down the romance. I wanted to focus a lot more on the dynamics and history between Danny and Eddie. I felt there was a long story there and a rich history between the two which could have been given more focus.

There was a strong anti Roman Catholic feeling in this story. Eddie had trained for the priesthood in his past but then joined the marines instead. This is interesting but we aren't given any story about this and what might have happened to support the anti RC feelings which come across in the book. The reader is left with the 'religion is bad' trope which does get overused in the mm genre.

In the end I felt the story was good and this is why I have given it four stars but at the same time it isn't one of my favourites from this author. It felt as if there was a lot more going on under the surface which wasn't yet being told. Hopefully since this is a series we might get to explore some of this in future books. I think as a first book in the series there is enough here for me to want to read the next one and I did enjoy the story, but I do wish a bit more had been explored in this one.

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### **Leanne says**

This started with lots of promise...a bout of angry, martial arts-type sex and two broken, guilt-ridden men in need of healing. I *wanted* the angst. I was ready for it. Practically salivating. But it sort of fizzled like a damp squib and the story became Tom's (the young runaway)....how he finds martial arts and a new family. Blah. The characters stayed pretty two dimensional (except Tom, perhaps) and I wish the author had invested in a bit more time with the two MC's- especially Eddie. I felt the way he got closure, riight at the end, after a brief talk with his mom (view spoiler)....rather simplistic and quite disappointing. This is no fault of the author though. I was just hoping for something a little darker and deeper.

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### **Jody says**

Few authors excel at projecting mutual heartache as good as Cat Grant as many of her male couples end up being put through the wringer for years before they find their HEA. Danny and Eddie are no exception as mutually perceived guilt and blame have kept them apart for years. They were once extremely close but now barely talk until the day a belligerent and physically/emotionally scarred teen enters their lives. The teen, Tom, left home after years of being beat by his high-profile father and is full of pent-up anger that they direct into becoming an MMA fighter. As Danny and Eddie had a successful career in the fighting world they're the perfect pair to turn Tom into a successful fighter with their work together forcing them to revisit the past and heal old hurts.

Through Catholic school and fear of disappointing others Danny and Eddie have kept their feelings for each other secret. The one time they gave into their feelings resulted in a death that ended their relationship before it even had a chance to start and has led to Danny following in his father's occasional drunken binges and Eddie working non-stop so he doesn't have time to think about his loneliness. Danny and Eddie both like helping the underdog. Even though Danny makes fun of Eddie for his habit of saving lost souls he's still the kind of man to go above and beyond to help a young man whose harsh early years remind him of himself. They're loyal men with kind hearts hidden behind stoicism and their journey towards a HEA is a satisfying and hard-won journey that manifests in lots of sexual tension and two richly rewarding sexual encounters.

Along with an immensely likable main couple comes Tom who's been through so much in such a short life. The rage he feels towards his father could help him in becoming a good fighter or bury him in rage. As if it's not difficult enough dealing with an abusive father he's also dealing with questions about his sexuality that are subtly hinted at here and make me desperate to have more of his story told. Eddie's mother Gloria is another delightful addition to the story as she's a wise and sassy older woman who cajoles these hardheaded men into doing what's right. She's funny and her scenes with Eddie are particularly heartwarming. In some ways I saw her as Yoda as she would come on the scene when the boys needed emotional comfort the most as say just the right thing.

Along with these realistic and immensely appealing cast of characters comes the vividly depicted world of fighting. I could feel the energy and excitement and became completely immersed in the heartpounding fight scenes drenched in sweat. Ms. Grant perfectly combined action with romance all the while emphasizing this testosterone-filled world featuring lots of sweaty and sexy men who wore their hearts on their sleeves. Tom has undertaken the first important step to having his own HEA and I greatly anticipate what Ms. Grant has planned for him in the future in this emotionally involving m/m novella.

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### **Nina ~ Meleth Bookaddicted ~ says**

Short MMA-themed gay romance. Hell to the yes!! It's sexy, full of tension and lots of hot guys grappling and fighting on the mat and in the ring. ...just don't read the blurb, because it pretty much tells you the course of the story. There's only so much more left to discover. Also, while the ending is somewhat satisfying, it came kind of abruptly. I wanted to know more about Danny and Eddie, because as much as I liked the two of them and their dance around one another, they stayed a bit one-dimensional in my opinion. However, the third point of view we got here was Tom's, and I am looking forward to learn more about him in the second book. ...maybe it'll give more substance to Eddie and Danny too. I surely hope so.

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### **Elizabethta says**

#### **3.5 stars**

*Black Dog* takes place in a small, California coastal town and is divided between Bannon's sports gym and the diner owned by Eddie and his mom. When eighteen-year-old Tom shows up in the diner alley beaten, bruised and fighting another homeless person for his belongings, Eddie steps into more than just breaking up a fight. He sees a lost boy and takes him in, offers him a job in the diner to get him off the street.

Tom carries hurts deeper than his bruises though, and it's clear he has an inner anger that he needs to burn off.

Eddie, an ex-Marine, used to train at Bannon's gym but he and Danny, gym owner and trainer, had a falling out a few months back. When Tom gets interested in training at the gym, this brings Eddie and Danny back together. Maybe they'll clear up the guilt and anger they've both been carrying. Maybe three guys in need will be able to help each other out. (I have to add that this is not a menage story, Ed and Dan have a long history and Tom, who is gay, is purely under their mentorship.) It becomes clear that Tom has a talent for mixed martial arts and with good training, he could amount to something in the sport.

This is well written. The depiction of the constant damp, gray days colors the mood, and the action moves along at a good pace. Eddie and Danny are the typical communication-phobic guys, and Eddie comes off as a bit melodramatic at times. If you can accept that they pretty immediately focus on helping Tom, then the story will work from that viewpoint -- they are two nice guys who know about life's knocks and want to help someone in need.

Basically, this is a story about domestic abuse (some violence is depicted) and as it unfolds we find out alcohol abuse factors in too. It is about the fight to overcome the stranglehold of these abuses. It is about

making a family where you can. For these issues, I'd recommend this.

I did have some problems though... the changing POV's between Eddie's first person, and Tom and Danny's third person is... weird. I can't figure why the author chose to change Eddie's vantage, the first person didn't really help things, imho, and it all just felt awkward. Eddie's and Danny's romance is not really central to the story though they have their hot moments; there is a lot going on in the plot. Also, the plotting is fairly pat, everything is sketched out neatly and there is a predictable (and welcome) resolution at the end.

But, this is a feel good story with some cool martial arts action thrown in for good measure. I like how the training is shown to teach confidence and control; fighting for it's own sake is not condoned. This is a lesson that Tom has to learn as he deals with his anger. I'm rounding my rating up to 4 stars for this alone, but this is really somewhere between 3 and 4 stars for me. A good start to a series based around Bannon's gym, I'll gladly return for more.

For this review and much more:

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### **MLE says**

Look who read a real book.

Yeup, that's me.

A really great story about family, love, friendship, and forgiveness. The characters were well developed, and the relationships strong and relatable. I love when a story is about more than just two people falling in love, and when friendship, and the family you make for yourself are just as important. A nice read for a rainy stretch of days. Pretty sexy too, which never hurts in my book.

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### **~◊~Doxni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~◊~ says**

I would have liked *Black Dog* so much more if it weren't HALF a book. This didn't so much end, as stop, with many plot points left dangling.

Despite the shifting POVs (first-person for Eddie and third-person for Danny and Tom), the writing was strong. I really liked the three MCs, as well as Eddie's awesome mom, Gloria.

Danny and Eddie were high school lovers, but following the death of Danny's brother, a death both Danny and Eddie feel responsible for, they've grown apart. Eddie left home, and his relationship with Danny is strained at best. Danny runs a boxing gym. Eddie runs his family's diner. One day, Eddie finds 18-year-old Tom, bruised and battered, fighting off a drunk in the alley behind the diner. Eddie offers Tom a job and place to stay. Tom has a natural talent for fighting and begins working out at Danny's gym.

This is as much a story about Tom and his abusive past, as it is a story about Danny and Eddie. Indeed, it's more Tom's story. We have just a couple scenes with Danny/Eddie alone together, and there is almost no

relationship development.

This is the BEGINNING of a book; the middle and end are MIA. I would have liked to read much more about Danny and Eddie reconciling. I am still not clear as to the nature of their relationship in high school: Did they only kiss or do more? And why the hell did Eddie join a seminary? Did he leave or finish? Why was he still in the closet? Was Danny in the closet? So many unanswered questions! I felt cheated.

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### **Gina Grant says**

This book made me cry. In a restaurant. Over pancakes. It takes a lot to cry while eating pancakes. But this book did it.

Which is not to say it's a sad book, it just has one or two sad moments. In fact, it runs the entire emotional spectrum from sexy to angry to joyous to hopeful. Cat Grant takes her readers on a real thrill ride.

It's m/m, but if you're expecting a bunch of sex scenes tied together, this isn't it. It's a real story.

It's hot and it's fun and it's meaningful.

But it's been a very long time since a book made me cry.

I can't wait for book 2 in the series. Thanks, Cat!

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