



Stepdog

Nicole Galland

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From the author of *The Fool's Tale* and *I, Iago* comes a disarmingly charming and warm-hearted “romcom” about a woman, her dog, and the man who has to prove that he is good enough for both of them.

Sara Renault fired Rory O'Connor from his part-time job at a Boston art museum, and in response, Rory—an Irish actor secretly nursing a crush on his beautiful boss—threw caution to the wind, leaned over, and kissed her. Now Sara and Rory are madly in love.

When Rory’s visa runs out on the cusp of his big Hollywood break, Sara insists that he marry her to get a green card. In a matter of weeks they’ve gone from being friendly work colleagues to a live-in couple, and it’s all grand . . . except for Sara’s dog, Cody, who had been a gift from Sara’s sociopath ex-boyfriend. Sara’s over-attachment to her dog is the only thing she and Rory fight about.

When Rory scores both his green card *and* the lead role in an upcoming TV pilot, he and Sara (and Cody) prepare to move to Los Angeles. But just before their departure, Cody is kidnapped by Sara’s ex—and it is entirely Rory’s fault. Sara is furious and broken-hearted. Desperate to get back into Sara’s good graces, Rory takes off and tracks Cody and the dog-napper to North Carolina. Can Rory rescue Cody and convince Sara that they belong together—with Cody—as a family? First they’ll need to survive a madcap adventure that takes them all across the heartland of America.

Stepdog is a refreshing and hilarious romantic comedy that asks: How far would you go for the one you love?

Stepdog Details

Date : Published August 4th 2015 by William Morrow Paperbacks (first published August 1st 2015)

ISBN : 9780062369475

Author : Nicole Galland

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Fiction, Animals, Dogs, Romance, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit, Humor, Contemporary Romance

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From Reader Review Stepdog for online ebook

Lara O'Brien says

Well now, I wish I had taken notes to be a more detailed reviewer but I didn't because I flew through Nicole Galland's new release, Stepdog.

There are a few things that made it a little gem of a novel and the most impressive is, Nicole Galland writes Rory O' Connor's POV...an Irish male, and for that I give her huge kudos, she got me. I was cheering Rory all the way.

I'm from Dublin so I found all the other reviews who didn't love Rory, like I did, irritating. I think he should run for President. Nicole captures Rory perfectly, I was fine with him not loving the dog the minute after he married his Mrs, it all happened very quickly, and let's face it, we don't all love our affectionate rivals. So that's why the cross-country adventure worked so well, an exciting chase, a villain in pursuit and a whole lot to lose, including his newly minted wife, and soon to have job-of-a lifetime, made their bonding of top priority.

The first half of the book was funny, clever and all things Boston. The second half was an amazing cross-country trip, well-paced and so well described you felt like you were actually driving the MINI with Rory and Cody. I'm still thinking of the some of the scenery and sound tracks, (LOVED the music choices to each character)

The ending was excellent and my only wish is that my favorite new character, Rory O' Connor, didn't do what he did, sooner. But he is a more patient man than I and I understand he had a lot to lose, so I give him a big shout out for keeping the head together.

Well done Nicole and team, Rory's playlist and Tikka Masala Recipe were like little gifts at the end. Nice way to stage left.

If you have any interest in Irish/american relationships, dogs, and adventure/humor of life, well, this novel is for you.

Kristine says

Original review can be found at <http://kristineandterri.blogspot.ca/2012/09/stepdog-by-nicole-galland.html>

** I received an advanced readers copy of this book from William Morrow Paperbacks via Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review. Thank you!**

Before I say anything there is something important that you need to know about me. I am a HUGE dog lover and I happen to be owned by a retriever similar in looks to the one on the cover but cuter. She is a member of my family and loved deeply. Did this impact how I felt about this book? Of course it did! I love dogs.

This story blends a contemporary romance with humour and an adorable four legged friend in a unique and attention grabbing way. I was pulled into the story immediately and enjoyed the ride from beginning to end. I

won't deny that there were a few things that bugged me but it was still a most pleasurable read.

I could really relate to the way Sara was with Cody. I saw a lot of myself and other family members in the way she was with the dog. However, offering to get married after one night together was pretty dumb so that is where the similarities ended. It did make for some page turning moments with some laugh out loud moments. Rory was a different story all together. I had a hard time liking him and I really think it was because of my love for dogs. He did grow on me as the story went on but I never managed to fully like him.

In the end this was a solid read that lovers of animals and romance will be sure to enjoy. This was the first book by Galland for me but it won't be the last.

Bloss ? says

I enjoyed this book!

The first half held my interest a bit better than the latter half. Once Alex was introduced, I really had to suspend disbelief and the story went off the rails a bit.

I really liked Rory (I totally pictured him as Roy from The IT Crowd). I adored Cody. Sara was a bit dog-loopy for me and her character never felt totally developed.

At times, as much as I like dogs, I felt rather sorry for Rory. Sara was unreasonable and extremist with the dog, usually at the expense of Rory. After all he'd been through, she needed to cut him some slack. Between the two extremes of Rory and Sara, I reckon there's a very reasonable middle ground if both of them grow up a bit.

Chris Porter says

This book gets 2.5 stars; one for it being about a dog, two because there's an Irish guy in it, and the other half star is for me taking the time to read it. By the end I wondered how much more similar Jay could get to Patrick Bergin's character in Sleeping with the Enemy. The second half of the book is ludicrous, and the author is too full of herself throughout the entire book. The only believable part is that no matter how much a dog can drive you crazy, it is almost impossible to not fall in love with them!

Kaethe says

I like Galland's writing: not too showy, a light touch, a zippy plotline. And a romance with a dog is appealing. But this book made me work for my pleasure. The narrator, Rory, is charming as hell, but also disorganized, and impulsive. So he's too much like me to let me like him, despite his charm. Seriously, he has all my worst traits. But, here's the thing: he doesn't like his wife's dog. I don't have a dog, just several cats, but I love petting other people's dogs, and in fact, cannot drive down the street without saying "good dog" whenever I see one. My lack of self-control is so embarrassing, and no doubt annoying as hell if you're in the car with me anywhere except an interstate. It's not that I distrusted the character, or thought he was a bad guy, but he was just so wrong. I loved Cody, and couldn't help but feel that there was something

fundamentally wrong with Rory that he didn't instantly love Cody too. I mean everyone else falls in love immediately. My dislike was deep-seated and strangely physical for an imaginary character.

Otherwise the book is a mash-up of Green Card and Basic Instinct and Galland makes it work. There was no way I was putting this puppy down until I was done: road trip, NC, characters with some deep and ugly issues, actors, and a really good dog. Next up from Galland for me will be I, Iago, because I really feel like she could make me sympathetic to one of the most purely evil characters in western literature.

Library copy

Amber Sweeney says

This book started off alright and was interesting enough that I wanted to know what happened next. The second half though was a bit foolish. Overall if I had to describe how this book made me feel in one word it would be frustrated.

Stacia Stephens says

Funny book about how Americans are crazy about dogs and told by a funny Irishman

Kelly Roll says

I generally try to give a synopsis but Goodreads has given such a long one that I recommend reading it. It is my understanding that this story is somewhat autobiographical so apologies in advance for not being a fan of Stepdog. As always though while this story did not appeal to me it may very well appeal to another reader.

There is a television called It's me or the Dog which is about a woman trying to work with couples n disagreement over a dog and what the dog gets to do. Some of the behavior on the human's part is a bit over the top and this show was sort of fun to watch. We have a similar sort of situation with Stepdog except for the fact that I don't think Sara is overly attached to her dog nor is her behavior in any way outrageous.

Rory O'Connor is the narrator of this story and he is supposed to come off as charming and funny. Unfortunately he was neither of those things for me. Rather he comes across as very self-absorbed. He continually complains that Sara spends much more time an attention on her dog than she does on him. Why wouldn't she? She has had a longer relationship with the dog and Rory makes no concerted effort to bond with the dog. He does things with the dog because he is mildly interested in making Sara happy but then whines about the effort he puts in. I never felt, even at the end, that he had come to love and accept the dog and some of Sara's fears in regards to the dog seemed quite reasonable. For example there is no way any of my animals are flying in baggage. As far as I am concerned Rory should have been grateful that she married him so that his dreams could come true and been a little kinder to Cody. Had I been in Sara's place I would have made sure he understood that the dog was as important and that her happiness mattered just as much. I wanted to kick Rory to the curb. I hope this fictional couple never has children because if he thinks the dog gets a lot of attention just wait for the reality that is a child.

Jess Van Dyne-Evans says

Equal parts rom-com and dime-store detective novel.

Mary Beth says

I am one that finishes a book once started but I have to say...this was hard to do. I am not sure why all the boring descriptions of various parts of this book were necessary. The last hundred pages and were the most exciting...the lead up to the main event was overwhelming in detail and provided characters that were not necessary to the plot of the story. The detail of the scenery traveling across the country were not compelling at all nor necessary to the plot. Quite frankly, the cover, which includes a Golden Retriever and the narrative on the back cover enticed me to read the book but what was in between...would not cause me to recommend.

Sara Heunisch says

this was fucking wild and not at all the campy book i expected to be full of dog and dude hijinks. FRANKLY IT GOT A LITTLE SCARY AND IM MAD HOW UNSETTLING IT GOT FOR A HOT SEC SOMETIMES.

also: maybe it's just because i'm an american woman also named sara and i am obsessed with my dogs, but this fuckin dude was the biggest asshole about the dog. even after all the time he invested in rescuing her and returning her to her owner (who she's been with for over a year, while he's been with her like, three months) and he bitches about the dog getting some attention. take a fuckin chill pill, bro.

Barb (Boxermommyreads) says

I couldn't wait to dive into *Stepdog* by Nicole Galland because I love a good pet story. Especially when it is woven into a good contemporary setting. Overall *Stepdog* did not disappoint even though I found a few aspects of the book irritating.

There were many things I loved about the book. First of all, the cover is great. The dog on the front seems pretty spot-on for how Cody is described so one of my main pet peeves didn't rear its ugly head (I hate it when dogs on covers do not resemble at all the dogs in the book, or worse yet, there are cute dogs on the cover who are never even mentioned in the book). Secondly, the plot of the books is a pretty fresh concept and not one I have seen overly done lately. The last 1/2 of the book flew by and the conclusion was satisfying, even if the first part was a tad slow. The action takes off right from the beginning, but I fear it overshadows the readers ability to form strong connections to some of the players. In addition, Galland has a unique writing style which took some getting used to in the beginning, but eventually came naturally.

Now for some of the irritants. Rory is the narrator of the book and he is desperately in need of a green card. He and Sara, after working together for a while, go on one date and when she learns he plans on marrying a

family friend to get a green card, decides they should just get married themselves rather than her having to date a married man. Talk about impulsive...and ill planned...and did I mention, probably stupid? However, they do and the novel proceeds from there.

Some might say Sara is overly attached to her dog Cody, but as an animal lover - I get it. Unfortunately Rory doesn't. He becomes irritated, jealous and throughout a lot of the book, criticizes Sara for her love for Cody. In my opinion, he should probably never be a pet owner, but it's a contemporary romance so it happens overnight. I never really liked Rory throughout the book. His character develops as the novel goes on, but for me, Rory never hits the mark. I certainly never liked him enough to impulsively marry him so he could get a green card. I did eventually like him enough that I would probably stay in touch with him once he was deported back to Ireland. I had some difficulty understanding why someone who clearly loves her dog, didn't see from the beginning that the situation with Rory was doomed, or at least seriously challenged.

I do have to mention there are some great side characters in the books. Alto is a wonderful transgender addition and many of Sara's friends come from diverse backgrounds which really added to the texture of the book.

Overall I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys animals, romance, or contemporary novels. There are also some humorous aspects, but you kind of have to like Rory more than I did to appreciate them. I feel this book is a strong 4 star book and it reminds me of the works of Lucy Dillon, who is one of my favorite authors.

I received this book from the publisher, through Edelweiss, in exchange for an honest review.

Becky says

When Rory gets fired, it should be a bad thing. But instead it turns out to be quite a pleasant ordeal. It is, after all, the reason he gets to kiss Sara, his boss. And it's also the reason they start dating. But when Rory is offered a shot at a series lead, his immigration status presents some problematic issues. In other words: no green card, no job!

Rory has a marriage offer already on the table courtesy of his cousin's widow. It would be a paper marriage, but it would definitely hinder his burgeoning relationship with Sara. So Sara offers to marry him instead. And Rory finds that being married to Sara isn't all that bad except for the fact that a relationship with Sara comes with one big, hairy, attention-hogging dog. It's not that Rory doesn't get along with Cody, but living life around the dog grates on the former bachelor. And when Cody is kidnapped, thanks to Rory, it's all he can do to get her back and save his relationship with Sara.

Sooo, first off this is a very cute book and, I might add, a successful change of pace for Galland. I should actually point out that it's a change in setting only, though. Rory, Sara, and Cody might all be in the here and now but Galland's wit, charm, and poetic prose are all present regardless of the fact that this isn't an historical novel. Rory even has a penchant for picking Shakespearean roles, as a little nod to Galland's backlist!

I felt for Rory. I've never quite experienced the feeling of being second to my husband's dog (yes, I have a stepdog and she did treat me as such for the first few years! We get along perfectly now.) but I've certainly known people who seemed just a bit... hm... Sara like. I've also been accused of loving my cats more than a boyfriend (I didn't, until he said it. Being with a person who's jealous of your pet is not pleasant.) So you can

see, I sympathize with Sara, too!

There's a bit more to the story but *Stepdog* is basically about a new couple trying to figure out their relationship under atypical circumstances. And of course every new relationship comes with hurdles, which is why Rory and Sara are so relatable and likable. It probably helps to some degree that this was a bit of a personal story for Galland as she herself did go through SOME of the same things Rory and Sara did.

Stepdog is great fun, readers. Seriously, great fun! Galland, as always, is a pro and I think Cody and her humans are going to win over even the most anti dog readers out there!

Cynthia W says

Blech. He was selfish, she was awful, the ex-boyfriend was worse. Liked the dog.

Susan says

With a change from her usual genre, Nicole Galland has written the most delightful rollicking comedy of a book that will have you laughing...and, at the end, your heart pounding as her feckless, yet charming, protagonist redeems himself in the wildest of cross country chases ever written.
