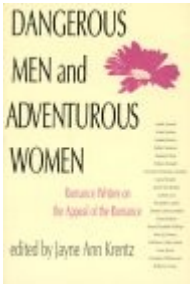
DAVID SHADE



Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women

Mark C

u
n
n
i
n
g
h
a
m

s
u
g
g
e
s
t
s

t
h
a
t

w
e

r
e
a
d

t
h
e

b
o
o
k
:

"
D
a
n
g
e
r
o
u
s

M
e
n

a

nd

Adventurous

Women."

It

is

a

collection

of

essays

by

19

l
e
a
d
i
n
g

r
o
m
a
n
c
e

a
u
t
h
o
r
s

o
n

t
h
e

a
p
p
e
a
l

o
f

t
h
e

r
o
m
a
n
c
e

n
o
v

el.

Edited by

Jayne Ann Krentz

and

copyright 1992 by Univ

e
r
s
i
t
y

o
f

P
e
n
n
s
y
l
v
a
n
i
a

P
r
e
s
s
,

1
8
6

p
a
g
e
s
.

I
S
B
N

0
-
8
1
2
2
-
1
4
1
1
1
-

Romance novels account for half of all book sales. Because women love them so much, I was curious about two things, what do women find so fascinating in the men featured in the books, and what is the psyche of the women readers. Basically, what do women want?

This book would lead me to believe that what woman need is to form relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. What women admire in themselves is courage. Both of these manifest themselves, or are played out, in her making that dangerous man fall in love with her.

The main topics of the romance novel are discussed below in the sections: The Plot, The Hero, The Heroine, Sex, The Authors, and The Readers.

THE PLOT, VICTORY FOR HER IS IN TEACHING HIM TO LOVE

"It requires that the final union of male and female be a fusing of contrasting elements: heroes who are gentled by love yet who lose none of their warrior qualities in the process and heroines who conquer devils without sacrificing their femininity. It requires a quintessentially female kind of victory, one in which neither side looses, one which produces a whole that is stronger than either of its parts. It requires that the hero acknowledge the heroine's heroic qualities in both masculine and feminine terms. He must recognize and admire her sense of honor, courage, and determination as well as her traditionally female qualities of gentleness and compassion. And it requires a sexual bonding that transcends the physical, a bond that reader and writer know can never be broken. Thus, as the romance novel ends, the contrasting elements in the plot are entirely fused and reconciled. Male and female are integrated. The heroine's quest is won. She has succeeded in shining light into the darkness surrounding the hero. She has taught the devil to love." (p.20)

"What is the fate of the most arrogant, domineering, ruthless macho hero any romance writer can create? He is tamed. By the end of the book, the heroine has brought him under her control in a way women can seldom control men in the real world. The heroine has managed to change him from an emotionally frigid Neanderthal into a sensitive, caring, nurturing human being. It is even tempting to say that she has turned him into a woman, and a case might be made for this were it not for the fact that our hero still maintains his warrior qualities. He is the mightiest of the might, the strongest of the strong. But, because he has been tamed by our heroine, because she exerts such a powerful emotional stranglehold over him, his almost superhuman physical strength is now hers to command. His strength now belongs to her." (p58)

"When a woman has a big, tough, powerful male on his knees and begging her to marry him, that's a trophy worth having." (p71)

"He needs her. Eventually he learns that her physical presence, even her sexual surrender, is not enough. He needs her to come willingly to him, not as a slave to be conquered but as an equal in all respects. He learns, usually with some pain, that to be truly happy himself he has to make her happy. Slowly he comes to realize that the only thing that will satisfy him is her admission of love for him, her equal commitment to a shared life.

Equal partners in every way, they will live out their life together." (p83)

"The stories make it clear that women value the warrior qualities in men as well as their protective, nurturing qualities. The trick is to teach the hero to integrate and control the two warring halves of himself so that he can function as a reliable mate and as a father. The journey of the novel, many writers say, is the civilization of the male." (p6)

"The books that hit the bestseller lists are invariable those with plots that place an innocent young woman at risk with a powerful, enigmatic male. Her future happiness, and HIS, depend upon her ability to teach him to love." (p17)

"The heroine's task and triumph is to civilize him, to turn him from a marauder into a worthy mate whose formidable strength will be channeled into protecting his woman and his children. She has saved the Alpha male, the leader of the pack, and can now share in his strength." (p101)

"The thrill and satisfaction of teaching that powerful male creature to respond only to your touch, of linking with him in a bond that transcends the physical, of communicating with him in a manner that goes beyond mere speech - that thrill is deeply satisfying. But to get the thrill, you have to take a few risks. The romance heroine must face a man who is a genuine threat." (p109)

"The hero, for all his fierceness, is quite literally brought to his knees to propose marriage and declare his undying love." (p127)

"To me this is the ultimate romantic fantasy: that the hero is changed, made somehow more heroic, through being loved by a heroic woman. For all his strength and independence, for all his hard edges, there almost always comes a point in today's romance novel where the hero acknowledges to the heroine that his life would cease to have meaning if she were to leave him. The hero has been given a new life, and it is the heroine who has given it to him." (p131)

"The first climactic point occurs when the hero acknowledges the heroine's heroic qualities. At that moment he begins his fall into love, a surrender that gives the heroine power over him. The second climactic moment occurs when the heroine uses her power over the hero to teach him how to love." (p141) "Thus the novel reaches its second intoxicating climax, the point at which the heroine uses the power she has over the hero to restore to him his ability to love." (p143)

THE ROMANTIC HERO, A WARROIR TO BE TAMED

The romantic hero is a leader, strong, intelligent, untamed, tough, courageous, cynical, macho and dangerous. Yet, he is communicative and, deep down, is susceptible to succumbing to the vulnerabilities of deep love.

"In real life, women often complain about the reluctance of their male partners to engage in meaningful dialogue, but in the world of romantic fantasy heroes willingly participate in verbal discussions. They fence, they flirt, they express their anger, they talk out the confounding details of

their relationships with the heroine. No hero of romance will ever respond to the eternal feminine query, "What's wrong?" with the word, "Nothing." He will tell her what's wrong; they will argue about it, perhaps, but they will be communicating, and eventually, as they resolve their various conflicts, the war of words will end. One of the most significant victories the heroine achieves at the close of the novel is that the hero is able to express his love for her not only physically but also verbally. Don't just show me, tell me, is one of the prime messages that every romance hero must learn. Romance heroines, like women the world over, need to hear the words, and the dialogue of romance provides them with this welcome opportunity." (p22)

"It's hero is a racing car driver: tough, courageous, cynical - very macho. At the beginning of the book he is a jaded recluse, disgusted with the world (and women) but by the end the heroine is the center of his life. The leopard was tamed." (p73)

"The hero's task in the book is to present a suitable challenge to the heroine. His strength is a measure of her power. For it is she who must conquer him. Every good romance heroine must have a hero who is worthy of her. And in most cases he is a mean, moody, magnificent creature with a curling lip and mocking eyes and an arrogant air of self-assurance - until he meets the heroine." (p81)

"Heroes are men who admit to being difficult to live with, who demand extremely high standards in every aspect of their lives, who are natural, effortless leaders, strong men, men with prestige and intelligence, whose faults are likely to be manifestations of strength and power. He is the master of his life; he is in control. Whether his sphere of influence is the boardroom or the mountains, the sea or the stage, the hero dominates it with his personality, his intelligence, and his quick, hard honed grasp of every situation. A hero can seem arrogant and short tempered, ruthless, tough, even cruel - he can be quite unloving at first." (p82)

"Love is not an easy thing to achieve, especially with a warrior. Warriors believe in loyalty, honor, strength, and death. Life and love are rather more slippery propositions. Though a part of the best warriors hungers for life, for warmth, for love and children and laughter, that very yearning is viewed as a weakness in a world where weakness is an invitation to death. A man who views love as a potentially lethal weakness is not likely to give in easily, even when he wants and needs love very much." (p93)

"Real men aren't afraid of strong women. In the novels I wrote, the hero is as active as the heroine. He can keep up with her. He can't surpass her, though - and he possess enough self-confidence not to let that fact bother him." (p137)

"The hero is also the man who lives on the edge. His is fundamentally uncivilized and untamed. His is primal. He is primitive. He is a man as warrior. She sees him as a man to be tamed through her love." (p152)

THE ROMANTIC HEROINE, A WOMAN OF COURAGE

The romantic heroine is a woman of intelligence, integrity, loyalty, faith, confidence, but above all courage. She conquers every challenge, the

most difficult of which is taming him.

"All these women share one vital quality - courage." (p48)

"The reader won't have to worry about the romantic heroin being too assertive, too aggressive, too verbally direct because the romantic hero is as strong as she is. He is a worthy opponent, a mythical beast who is her heroic complement." (p19)

"At some purely instinctive level, the heroine knows she can trust him. However, she also knows that the initial attraction is powerful but almost entirely sexual. She understands that there is much more to love then physical attraction, and she is not going to bestow her future on the hero until he, too, realizes this." (p82)

"But it is the heroine who has control over what will and will not happen. She values herself most for qualities that have nothing to do with her sexuality - qualities such as integrity, loyalty, courage, intelligence, generosity spirit, and often, a sense of humor. No man will be worthy of her until he recognizes those qualities and until he, himself, values her for them." (p123)

"I try to give the heroines in my books the traits and qualities traditionally reserved for heroes in other types of fiction: honor, loyalty, integrity, courage, intelligence, and good old-fashioned grit. The heroine may begin the book unhappy, even in deadly peril, but she is a survivor. By the story's end her world is in order and her future is rosy because she, along with her hero, have made it that way. (p128)

"In a sense, the entire plot of a romance novel becomes a metaphor for the risk that women take when they fall in love. The satisfaction comes when our heroine finally does take the plunge, giving herself wholly, both emotionally and physically, to such a man - and her choice turns out to be the right one. Instead of hurting her, he cherishes her." (p129)

"What the heroine does, not what she is, lies at the heart of the novels I write." (p134)

"The heroines who populate my books believe. They harbor vast quantities of faith - in themselves, in the future, in humanity, in the power to do good in the world. No matter how difficult their lives have been or how many scars they bear, they don't give up hope. They may be in retreat as a novel opens, but by the end they have recovered their faith and set their sites accordingly. It is surely an act of faith to open oneself to intimacy. I create heroines strong enough to take that perilous step, to trust themselves and those around them, to make themselves vulnerable to love." (p135)

"But in the romance novel women celebrate the heroic qualities they think are most important in their own sex: honor, courage, intelligence, integrity. In a romance novel, the heroine may be beautiful, but her beauty is a side issue, not an important aspect of her nature. The hero may be attracted to her initially because of her beauty, but the heroine will not accept him until he has recognized her heroic qualities." (p142)

"In romance novels love is portrayed as an adventure embarked upon by

free, bold women who know that their true power lies in their own heroic qualities." (p144)

"I often force my heroines to exhibit tremendous courage in the face of disaster. They meet head on situations that I would avoid at all costs." (p147)

"The heroine is also an intelligent woman, an honorable woman, a brave woman. (Don't forget, she is the only one who dares to love the hero.)" (p152)

"In the romance novel the domineering male becomes the catalyst that makes the empowerment fantasy work. The heroine isn't as big as he is; she isn't as strong, as old, as worldly; many times she isn't as well educated. Yet despite all these limitations she confronts him - not with physical strength but with intelligence and courage. And what happens? She always wins! Guts and brains beat brawn every time." (p56)

SEX IN THE ROMANCE NOVEL

Romance novels run the entire gamut from explicit slutty narrative printed on cheap paper (pulp fiction), to the deep plot masterpieces (Thick Document "ON") where sex is merely implied. For the most part, sex plays a small part in the overall novel, certainly not narrated in detail, ("they made passionate love") and there only to add to the story. Sex is sometimes a rape early in the novel but always a celebration of the bond created between the heroine and the hero in the later half of the novel.

"He also happens to be wonderful in bed. It is a given that a woman is entitled to sexual satisfaction and that a real man can't be fulfilled unless his partner is also fulfilled." (p137)

"The hero is often sexually experienced. He has known many desirable women. His choice of a marriage partner is virtually unlimited. Yet once he makes love to the heroine, he remains forever bound to her." (p131)

"Nobody has ever made love to her quite the way the hero does." (p130)

"In romance novels, there is not sex for the heroine without her first falling in love." (p129)

THE AUTHORS

Of the authors that did mention their personal lives, they were well educated, had some successful career before turning to writing romance novels, were married to stable men far different from the romantic hero, had chaotic lives of their own raising children, would never marry a romantic hero type, and would never have the guts to do what the romantic heroine did.

"I didn't expect to meet and marry the man of my fantasies; indeed, the warm, loving, even tempered man I did marry has little in common with the brooding hero of romance." (p49)

"My husband, ever the logical lawyer, is fond of saying that if he once behaved the way the heroes do in my books, I'd serve him with

separation papers the same day. And he's right - because we, for better or worse, are inhabiting reality." (p 79)

THE FEMALE READER'S PSHYCE, LEARNING TO LOVE ONE'S SELF

In reading the romance novel, the woman escapes into a fantasy world where she can be everything she has always wanted to be and feel everything she has always wanted to feel with the security of knowing that there will be a happy ending.

"The romantic hero is not the feminine ideal of what a man should be. The romantic hero, in fact, is not a man at all. He is a split-off portion of the heroine's own psyche which will be reintegrated at the end of the book. It has been argued that psychological integration depends on encountering the shadow and accepting it. If the romance novel teaches a woman to love anybody, the person she must learn to love is herself." (p49)

'The fantasy these novels offered me was one of command and control over the harum scarum events of my live - a fantasy of female empowerment. For me, there was nothing more satisfying then the illusion that I was in command of all the external forces that so frequently frazzled and threatened me in real life." (p55)

"Men represent to women one of the greatest sources of risk they will ever encounter in their lives. Taking risks and winning out against all odds is one of the great pleasures of fantasy." (p112)

"Why do woman enjoy reading about such men, whose only redeeming feature at first seems to be that they fall violently and completely in love with the heroine? In most cases readers are happily married to men who bear no resemblance to this pattern of masculinity. Until very recently in our historic past, strong, successful, powerful men had the greatest prospects of fathering children who survived. If a woman formed a close bond with a men who was sensible, competent and quick witted, one high up in the family or tribal pecking order, a man with the ability to provide food and protection for her and any children she might have, the chances of her children surviving were greater then those of a women whose mate was inefficient." (p82)

"The Wellesley College's Stone Center studies have found that healthy women reach maturity not by severing relationships but by forging them." (p135)

"I was reared to believe in traditional values. I was finally given a chance to be a bad girl." (p147)

"The romance novel provides its readers with a safe way to experience the broad range of emotions, both male and female, both the hero's and the heroine's, associated with the roller coaster ride of falling in love." (p153)

THE END

"Romances must end at the marriage. If the heroine were to continue to increase in her own power and authority she would see that once the passage from virgin to mother is accomplished, men, in a way, are no

longer essential. The virgin, almost by definition, requires a male partner in order to move into the second aspect of goddess, but in a woman's narratives that deal with motherhood, midlife, and aging, men are less central to the myth." (p51)