



Animal Cracker

Andi Brown

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Who hasn't suffered in the workplace with a strangle-worthy boss? With humor and charm, "Animal Cracker" offers up a bunch of smart women who plot to get the goods on their boss at Boston's venerable Animal Protection Organization.

Readers rave! "Hilarious plot is cleverly crafted around believable characters... couldn't put it down, found myself laughing out loud through the plot's twists and turns, and would highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys great dialogue and three dimensional characters."

Animal Cracker's a comedy and a mystery! Diane Salvi has found the job of her dreams in a pet rescue operation. Her gorgeous boss should be on her side, but instead obstructs her efforts to promote more animal adoptions. Is he merely annoying, or guilty of something much, much worse? Diane, her reporter roommate, and some savvy women in the office join forces to find out.

More from readers: "Worth missing a night's sleep." And "I laughed and cried, but mostly laughed."

Animal Cracker is the perfect read for anyone seeking sharp writing, clever women, and a great page-turner. You don't need to be an animal lover to love Animal Cracker, but if you are a champion of animal rights, you can't miss this one.

Animal Cracker Details

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Author : Andi Brown

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From Reader Review *Animal Cracker* for online ebook

Madeline says

Andi Brown sent me a free paperback copy of this book in exchange for an honest review, and I will do my best to uphold my part of the deal. Brace yourselves.

Animal Cracker takes place primarily at the fictional Animal Protection Organization in Boston. Our heroine is Diane, a twenty-four-year-old just starting a job as the communications director of the APO. Her boss, Hal, is a cartoonish nightmare vision of a horrible boss – he's patronizing, vaguely misogynistic, lazy, and stupid. The book follows Diane and her coworkers as they try to take down their terrible boss. Hijinks and attempts at humor follow, accompanied by unlicensed shelters and dying homeless animals. It's a weird blend, to say the least.

Okay look, the whole thing isn't terrible. At least, the idea behind it isn't – a group of women working together to upset the patriarchy and save cute animals! That's like, four things that I love all rolled together. Where *Animal Cracker* fails, spectacularly, is in the execution of just about every aspect.

Simply put, this needed an editor. A real editor, not just friends of the author who agreed to proofread the novel a few times before it was self-published. A real editor – or hell, someone who knows how to use Google – would have at least been able to catch the numerous and glaring errors littering the text. To name a few: it's Stephen King, not Steven King; you drink margaritas, not margheritas; and no twenty-four-year-old alive today would ever dial Information when trying to locate a specific bar. (I'm twenty-four, and until I read this book I wasn't aware that "telephone operator" was a job that still existed in the 21st century) But the biggest suspension-of-disbelief-ruiner happens towards the end of the book, when Diane is trailing Hal to figure out what he's up to. To make sure she isn't recognized, Diane disguises herself as a man and follows her boss. To the airport. And onto a plane.

Pop quiz, readers: what can you absolutely *not* do in post-9/11 America, ever? Get through airport security carrying the identification of a person who looks nothing like you, that's what. I can't even really remember what happened in the pages immediately after that part, because I was too busy trying to figure out how Diane, dressed as man, managed to pass security by showing *a woman's* driver's license. It threw me out of the story so hard I think I still have whiplash. (At the end of this book, Andi Brown thanks the numerous people who helped her prepare this manuscript, and my question is, *how did none of them catch this?*)

This story is fixable, I want to emphasize that. It needs to go through at least two more drafts, but it can be done. But it's going to take more than a red editor's pen, Ms. Brown – someone needs to take a hatchet to this book and cut out all the excess. And there's a lot of excess to get rid of. Entire scenes can be removed (almost an entire page is wasted describing the time Diane goes to the movies by herself), and the character list could be sliced almost in half. There are two female reporters in this book that could easily be combined into one person, and the APO office staff needs to be downsized to three characters so the author can spend more time making them actual characters and not interchangeable cardboard cutouts. Diane, Katelyn, and Mary Day – that's all we need (oh, and if Mary Day is really going to be portrayed as a clichéd Southern belle, make sure she doesn't misuse the word "y'all" or say "fuck" twice in a workplace setting, because trust me, those are two things a Southern belle never, ever does) All romance aspects should be sent to the Graveyard of Unnecessary Subplots – Diane does not need to be dating her boss's son, and she definitely doesn't need to be consumed by grief over her last failed relationship, as both subplots add nothing to the story and only pissed me off. Also, it was super weird to me that what eventually brought Hal down was

(view spoiler).

But these minor issues pale in comparison to the greatest problem, and the reason I cannot in good conscience give this book more than one star: Diane is a complete asshole.

First there are the little nuggets of casual racism she drops throughout the book – at one point, her date is describing the Japanese-to-English instructions on a hairdryer, and Diane goes, “I’m picturing a Japanese guy in a cubicle...he’s got his sake in one hand and a dictionary in another.” *Ha ha, it’s funny because Japanese people drink sake and aren’t born speaking English! You’re so funny, Diane!* Then there’s the way she confides to the reader that she considers herself to be just like Bridget Jones, “minus the poundage and the alcoholism.” But the worst, the absolute worst, is the way she treats her office “friend” Katelyn. Katelyn is poor, you see, and has a son with behavioral problems, and also has an abusive ex, because this is a fucking Lifetime movie. Diane cannot spend longer than five minutes with Katelyn before she starts mentally thanking God that she doesn’t have Katelyn’s life, and condescension seeps from every pore whenever she interacts with her token Down on Her Luck Friend. I kept waiting for Katelyn to smack the snobby bitch upside the head, but sadly this never happens. The best way I can sum up Diane’s hideous personality is by quoting the following passage: “We went upstairs and I plopped into one of her shabby armchairs. Katelyn went into her kitchen and emerged, not with tea, but a bottle of wine that looked cheap, which she poured into a couple of chipped coffee mugs.”

Right, because if anyone is going to have high standards for wine, it’s a twenty-four-year-old struggling to pay her student loan bills. Again – Diane and I are the same age, and I (like everyone in my age group) have never paid more than eleven dollars for a bottle of wine in my life. Even if I went over to a friend’s house and she offered me a glass of Two Buck Chuck I wouldn’t think a goddamn thing about it, because I’m twenty-four and also I’m not a bitch.

This book could have been a fluffy, fun, hijinks-filled romp about a group of women taking down their horrible boss and saving some cute animals at the same time. Instead, it reads like the first draft of a failed multi-cam sitcom. A few more rounds of revision could have saved *Animal Cracker*, but instead we’re left with this hot mess instead: a weird hybrid of *Nine to Five* and *The Devil Wears Prada* (not the hybrid of *The Office* and *Bridget Jones’ Diary*, as the jacket description insists) that completely misses what made those stories enjoyable in the first place.

Nerisa Eugenia Waterman says

This book will definitely capture your attention and you will become immediately invested in the story. Dianne the main character, lands her dream job at Animal Protection Organization... or at least that’s what she thinks. Hal, Dianne’s boss, the Director of the Animal Protection Organization, is caught under Dianne’s radar of suspicion and Dianne recruits her co-workers and her roommate to help her investigate Hal....and that’s when the fun begins.

The story is as entertaining, as it is realistic, and there’s more to the story that meets the eye as it unfolds. The author did a wonderful job in transporting the readers to Boston with her vivid description, I actually felt like I was right there in Boston.

My Full Review: <http://myohosisters.webs.com/apps/blo...>

Cinthia Ritchie says

I loved the idea of this book, which centers around an animal shelter organization. Diane, and a group of quirky but lovable friends and co-workers, fight against the deplorable Hal, who rules the organization with questionable tactics.

This is a fun and breezy read.

What I appreciated most is the writing, which is deft and flows well. Brown never over-writes, which is refreshing (thanks you so much for this, Andi!).

I would have liked more animals involved in the story. I expected dogs to pop their bony heads throughout the pages and while this does happen, it's one area where Brown could have further developed. It would have added another layer of humor and endearment.

The plot reads fast, and while some of it is a bit unrealistic, no matter. Readers will root for Diane and discover pieces of themselves in her spunky character.

Most of all I appreciated that Brown doesn't sink to the standard chick-lit formula of a woman needing a man to complete her story.

Bravo! Women can drive their own stories and lives without needing a man to complete the journey, and Diane fully attests to this.

I recommend "Animal Cracker" as a quick and fun read while traveling or curled at home on the couch during a winter snowstorm.

Erica Jennings says

It seems the universe has given Diane Salvi a break, as she narrates her story of personal change, growth and opportunity.

While volunteering at an animal shelter following a devastating breakup from her ex-boyfriend Andrew, Diane applies to an advert for a position at Animal Protection Organization as their new communications director.

Diane begins her dream job and we are introduced immediately to her new boss, Hal Mason. Hal is Brad-Pitt handsome with a charismatic air about him that seems untouchable. Hal's wife is a successful Harvard professor, television personality and author. Hal's son, Mark, catches Diane's eye and soon wins her heart with his unorthodox ways of playing by his own set of rules.

Diane's roommate, Genie and Genie's boyfriend, Donnie, are Diane's confidants and sounding boards in life. As Diane comes face to face with the reality that Hal may be more of a stumbling block than an ally in Diane's endeavours to make a success of her new position, Genie and Donnie offer support and a different perspective to assist Diane in defining who Hal really is.

It soon becomes apparent that there is a lot more to the story than meets the eye, as Diane becomes aware of the internal politics from her co-workers within the organization. This encourages Diane driven by her own passion for animals and the organization to seek answers and truth about what appears to be and what really is.

Andi Brown has a writing style most authors seem to miss, and that is how to tell a story without getting side-tracked. The story flows smoothly, was entertaining and most importantly as realistic as they come without being boring or over-the-top.

It is at this point that I must stress that this is not my normal genre of book to read, and I personally do not enjoy narrated stories and yet Andi Brown successfully kept me engrossed as Diane Salvi through her

eloquent and down-to-earth writing style.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would describe it as a refreshing read which bring a jester smile to your face and a satisfying “I feel good” at the end of the book.

Deanndra Hall says

As a reader, I enjoyed this little read from author Andi Brown. I found characters I actually cared about, witty dialogue (both internal and external), and a well-crafted story line. It dragged just a slight bit in the first half of the book, but the end was worth waiting for. And if you don't see Alec Baldwin in your mind while you're reading this, you're probably really out of touch with modern culture.

As a writer, I was pleased with the plot line. The formatting was good, and I found only marginal errors, maybe a few punctuational, a couple of extra words, and one incorrectly-conjugated verb. But, hey, that happens to all of us, n'est-ce pas? I felt that both the crisis and denouement were well-executed, and I noticed no loose ends.

And by the way, the cover art is cute too!

Jane Hunt says

Animal Cracker captured my interest as an animal lover but with elements of humour, romance, mystery and crime it has a wide appeal.

Set in an animal rescue center the story is told through the eyes of Diane the newest member of staff. She is an animal lover, gifted with the idealism and naivety of the young. This ensures a story full of humour, poignancy and relevance.

The numerous characters are integral to the plot. The story focuses on fund-raising for the animal shelters, which throws up an eclectic range of individuals so beautifully crafted they are real. The mystery and tension in 'Animal Cracker' is cleverly written ensuring you keep reading.

Hal the animal shelter director is noteworthy. I hated him from his first appearance. This increased my empathy with Diane the heroine as she vows to discover the mysteries of her new workplace.

An easy read it is ideal for the journey to work or a lunch break treat.

'I was gifted a Kindle copy of Animal Cracker' by Andi Brown the author in exchange for an honest review.'

Jane Hunt Writer First Steps
Andi Brown

Sue Kozlowski says

This book was a little slow and confusing in the beginning - There were so many characters and places introduced and described at once that I had to keep rereading pages. The story reminds me of the author Laurien Berenson - she is an animal lover whose stories revolve around the love of animals, with a mystery that needs to be solved.

This book picked up and I couldn't put it down b/c I was curious to see how it ended! Cute characters and I enjoyed reading about places in Boston that I am familiar with.

Kay (Brigidsmomma) Compton says

This one was really well done. The characters were highly developed and believable - I really got my hate on for the villain. The real surprise to me was that no one actually killed the jerk! Well written, with lots of details about what it takes to run a successful non-profit animal rescue (and the easiest way to sabotage one too). I would HIGHLY recommend this one to all my friends who work in animal rescue; I am sure they will enjoy it too!

Kathryn says

Andi Brown has written a smart and funny book featuring the main character, Diane Salvi. Diane who has recently left a job she didn't like lands herself in a job that is something she never would imagine. Her boss turns out to be crackers as the story unfolds. The cast of characters are funny and had me laughing as Diane begins to uncover the truth about her boss. Andi Brown's characters are wonderful and the story, while serious, takes on comic undertones as well.

Carrie Secor says

"Animal Cracker" reminded me a lot of "The First Wives' Club", except instead of ex-husbands, the girls are trying to get back at their douchey boss. I really enjoyed Andi Brown's dry and witty sense of humor throughout the book. It was also refreshing to read a novel where the main character, a young woman, was focusing primarily on her career and not just on romance. Overall, I thought it was a light, funny read and would definitely recommend.

Lisa of Hopewell says

Andi Brown is a talented writer and I look forward to more from her in the future. This book was a light read. I did not find it enough like Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones to live up to the billing, though this is the fault of a reviewer and not of the author. The characters are believable, the dialogue is compelling and current. As an animal nut I was drawn to the story and overall it was a fun, light read.

Note: I was given a free copy to review by the author. I appreciate any author's request for reviews and the sacrifice giving away a copy of her work represents. I hope I will be asked to review her next book.

Kendra says

Lots of humor in this whacky mystery. One of the things I enjoyed most about it was that it showed that not all women are the catty, back-biting bunch of human beings we sometimes get labeled as. The protagonist is a smart, empathetic woman, trying make her way in the world while trying to do good things at the same time. Don't get me wrong - it's not a sappy tale, although the conditions some of the animals found themselves in broke my heart. I thought I had old Hal Mason figured out from the beginning, but the author had more twists than I expected. Thanks Andi Brown - I'd love to see more!

Carrie Lahain says

I didn't start Andi Brown's *ANIMAL CRACKER* expecting to stay up reading until six in the morning. I'd finished another novel and wanted a quick peek at the next one on my list before going to bed. But Diane, Brown's over-educated under-employed heroine, caught my attention from the first scene. She's the newest hire at Animal Protection Organization, Boston's premier animal welfare charity. Diane is their PR professional, a dream position for a girl who loves animals and loves to write. Only the dream becomes a nightmare thanks to her boss, Hal, who seems to go out of his way to thwart his staff's best efforts at fundraising and promotion. Is it simply a matter of a self-absorbed administrator neglecting his job? Or is Hal guilty of something worse? Fearing for the welfare of the APO and the helpless creatures in its care, Diane and her quirky co-workers set out to discover the truth.

Brown creates distinctive characters with authentic voices. My favorites include pink-loving queen of donor relations Mary-Day and the vulnerable Katelyn, a receptionist with terrible taste in lovers. Diane herself is a great mix of steel and self-consciousness. This is not a woman who has her life together by any stretch of the imagination, but she knows right from wrong and goes to hysterical lengths to see justice prevail.

At one point, when Diane and her reporter roommate travel to Colorado to uncover Hal's secret, the plot edges dangerously close to farce. And I never did buy the author's description of Hal as an aging Brad Pitt type. I kept envisioning him as Ed Begley Jr in one of his slimier roles, say, the philandering college professor in *TERMS OF ENDEARMENT*. On the other hand, Brown's descriptions of Boston--especially north Boston--put you right there. I wanted to get on a plane and visit some of the restaurants in her Little Italy.

ANIMAL CRACKER is a light, funny read. Well worth missing a night's sleep.

Jodi says

I got the opportunity to read *Animal Cracker* when author Andi Brown put out a call for reviews on her Twitter account. Never one to miss the opportunity for a free read I read the synopsis on Amazon and happily sent my credentials to the contact email in her Tweet. Within about thirty minutes Ms. Brown kindly sent me a Kindle copy of her book (she generously offered a print copy as well) and simply asked that I provide an honest review online for other readers.

I truly am thankful that I happened to be on Twitter when Andi put out her request because *Animal Cracker* was the novel equivalent of a hot cup of cocoa. It wasn't the heartiest thing I could have read, and it didn't qualify as something healthful or edifying, but I felt warm and comforted as I zipped through the story.

My full review is available at: my blog.

Be forewarned that there are spoilers for the ending in some points of the review.

Kaethe says

A look inside a purely fictional Animal Protection Organization, the shelters, the benefits, the travails of rescuing animals. The big fun here is watching the women who run the office taking down the horrible, sexist, patronizing, lazy-ass, overpaid boss. Oh, who doesn't love *Nine to Five*? Or *The Devil Wears Prada*? Revenge fantasy is a sweet pleasure.

For those who enjoy these sorts of things, there's also lots of Boston scenery, a little real estate porn, and drool-worthy menus of primarily Italian food. And, of course, heartwarming stories about critters finding their forever homes.

One full star off for the repeated misuse of "y'all" which is a plural contraction of "you all" and is not used to address a single person. Certainly never by an educated Southerner, which *Mary-Day* is supposed to be. Half star off for not distinguishing the characters of the women as much as I would like, but major props for having a diverse cast of characters, and a heroine with lots of female friends.

A fun read for the grown-ups who loved *Nancy Drew*.

Review copy provided by author.
