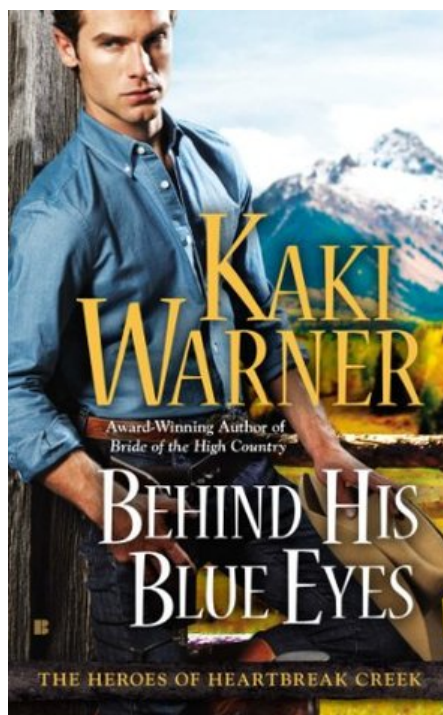




Behind His Blue Eyes

Kaki Warner

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Behind His Blue Eyes Kaki Warner

Award-winning author Kaki Warner gives fans a reason to celebrate with the first in a brand-new Western trilogy set in Heartbreak, Colorado, starring an advance man for the railroad—and the woman whose trust (and heart) he longs to win. For fans of Linda Lael Miller and Jodi Thomas...

Hoping to escape his past, Ethan Hardesty left a career as an architect and went to work for the railroad. Only two things impede his desire to transform Heartbreak Creek into a thriving town once again—a vandal bent on stopping the railroad, and the beautiful but hardheaded woman who won't sign over the final right-of-way through the canyon.

Audra Pearsall has good reason for not allowing a train to pass within yards of her home, no matter how persuasive the handsome Mr. Hardesty can be. But when vandalism escalates to murder and fear stalks the canyon, Audra doesn't know who to turn to—until the man she thought was her friend proves to be an enemy, and the man she wouldn't allow herself to trust becomes her reluctant hero...

Behind His Blue Eyes Details

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From Reader Review Behind His Blue Eyes for online ebook

Julia says

I need to take a Warner break, I just cannot warm up to all these psychotic villains.

Dark Faerie Tales says

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: Audra Pearsall is running from her home in Baltimore to give her ailing father a better chance. Audra, her father and their two servants end up in a small town called Heartbreak Creek. On their arrival they are repeatedly rescued by someone else running from his past, Ethan Hardesty. Unfortunately it would seem that Ethan wants the only home they have and Audra is not willing to give it to him. Then bad things start happening. Is this the work of Mr. Hardesty trying to get their land or something much more threatening going on?

Opening Sentence: "Another letter come today."

The Review:

Audra Pearsall's entire life is falling apart. Her father is ailing and there is no money to take care of her household which includes her, her father and their two elderly servants, Winnie and Curtis. To save her household from starving Audra takes a risk that could put her in jail, leaving no one to watch her father besides Winnie and Curtis. When it seems her secret will be found out Audra packs everything up and moves them all to a little nothing town called Heartbreak Creek. Things are about to change in this quiet little town though when the railroad decides to come through the town and wants to come right past her front door. When the handsome man from the railroad comes to buy her out she refuses him even though he makes her weak in the knees. Unfortunately, someone is out to stop the railroad at any cost – even murder. Ethan Hardesty goes from wanting to buy Audra out to wanting to protect her from everything, including himself.

I loved Audra, she was the type of woman I have always wanted to be. She is strong, smart, loyal and fearless. When her father becomes sick and it is up to her to take care of him she does not crumble or just marry the first man to come along. Instead she takes over her father's job in secret and is able to put food on the table at the cost that if she is found out she could be arrested. Then when she moves her household and it seems nothing can go right she calmly asks Ethan who she has just met to shoot her. She does not cry or beg for help. Many people would have put their father in a home if they were in a similar position, but Audra would rather take care of him even when he is having a bad day than see him separated from those he knows. Then when her home is destroyed she picks herself up again and keeps on going. The best part about her though is she is willing to step in to save a Chinese boy from being whipped even when it means that the man whipping him would turn his anger onto her.

Ethan is many women's dream man. He is tall, good looking in a fair sense, has a sense of humor and can be boyish and charming when he wants to be. He does have a secret that still haunts him three years after the fact in both his dreams and in his real life. The disaster that occurred to leave him with his secret has also made him want to avoid woman, especially Audra who always seems to be getting into some trouble or the other. No matter what his intentions when it turns out that Audra owns the last bit of land he needs to get the railroad through that he works for they are thrust together over and over again. Audra may be the key to

saving Ethan from the past or the reason he goes past the point of no return.

This book was really good. It is a western, a romance and a mystery all in one. The author, Kaki Warner, is very good at combining the three in a way that really draws you in. I usually do not care for westerns and will only read certain mysteries but this worked so well together that I couldn't wait to see what happened next. Usually with mysteries, I can figure out pretty early on who is the bad guy but in this one I did not figure it out until the author decided to reveal it. I recommend this book to adults who enjoy all different genres. Also, I liked this book so much I think I am going to go read the series she wrote before this one, The Runaway Brides Series.

Notable Scene:

Alarmed, Audra sought out Mr. Driscoll and asked what was amiss.

“Another fire, the harried man said, tossing a long canvas pipe with a portable hand pump into the back of a wagon filled axes, shovels, rakes and leaking water barrels. “A big one. Better be ready to run if the wind pushes it down the canyon into town.”

FTC Advisory: Berkley/Penguin provided me with a copy of Behind His Blue Eyes. No goody bags, sponsorships, “material connections,” or bribes were exchanged for my review.

Sandy M says

I'm glad Kaki Warner is adding to her Heartbreak Creek series with this new spin-off series, Heroes of Heartbreak Creek. As much as I love all the characters I've meet from this friendly, upstart town in the first three books, I look forward to all the new folks she'll introduce me to in these new books. Everything about her stories is heartwarming, sweet, and sensual as well as fraught with danger and outlaws, which gives her characters more strength and courage than they ever thought they'd have. The Old West is alive and well in Kaki Warner's hands.

Ethan Hardesty is in Heartbreak Creek to facilitate the railroad coming to town. The townsfolk are anxious to be a stop along the tracks, bringing more people and business. Right off the bat he runs into problems. First is in the form of Audra Pearsall who has just moved her family into the home standing on the land the railroad needs to run their track. The woman is being stubborn, and he doesn't truly need her to agree to his offer to get what he wants, but for some reason he holds back, hoping they can come to some agreement.

Taking care of her father the best way she can, Audra goes a step too far, forcing her to take her father and two Negro servants, who are more like family, to run west as fast as they can. The home they come to in Colorado isn't ideal, but it will work – until Audra discovers the railroad wants to take everything. But when mysterious happenings begin, putting lives in danger, Audra moves her family into town, thanks to the generosity of the new friends they've made.

Both Ethan and Audra have their secrets, the kind that have repercussions. The kind that doesn't infuse trust, but these two learn very quickly amid danger that trust is exactly what is needed. I love the way they meet – I smiled and laughed all the way through that initial scene or two – but I really love the way they eventually come together when being in a relationship is not what either needs nor wants. Well, that's what they think.

Ethan and Audra are beautiful together. And the twist that it's Ethan who wants marriage while Audra wants a trial run to see how things go only adds to the amusement. Their repartee is fun and becomes even more so as they get to know one another. I would have liked just a tad more emotion connection between them, however.

As we get to know Ethan along with Audra, we learn of his disastrous relationship with a former lover over a number of chapters. Suspense is not just for the villain in this book. The fun we share with the characters is shattered by a number of things from a scumbag with a whip to a not-so-unbiased journalist to the evilness that is desperate to stop the railroad. There is a lot going on in this story, and Ms. Warner weaves it all together seamlessly.

That being said, I do have to say that the book starts off at a pretty slow pace. If I hadn't read Ms. Warner before and wasn't familiar with the previous characters in this series, I may have put the book down and come back to it at a later time. But I know this author's talent and I know she wouldn't let me down, so when you get this far in the series, please don't give up. When you get to the romance and the intensity and suspense when Audra could lose her life, everything comes together in a way that only someone of Ms. Warner's caliber can give readers.

Heartbreak Creek will be one of my favorite series for a long time to come, and I will read every word Kaki Warner releases in the future. I hope if you haven't read any of her books that you'll start soon. You'll love them every bit as much as I do.

See my complete review at <http://www.goodbadandunread.com>

Mary23nm says

[Most of those characters are in this book as soon as the hero and heroine arrive in Heartbreak Creek, and much of the story is about them. The first half of the book, after the intro, is quite dry. The serial killer plot livened things up towards the end. The epilogue is not about the main characters (they are mentioned) but rat

Gail says

I like the books Kaki Warner writes. This one is no exception. It's linked to her Runaway Brides series, taking place in Heartbreak Creek, Colorado and including the characters from the earlier series. The hero is a railroad advance man. The heroine is bringing her family-- an elderly father with dementia and the African American couple who've been taking care of the family for 20 years or so-- to live in a cabin they've inherited. Which is in the railroad right of way. The story starts with the hero wanting to buy the right of way, but expands quickly beyond into a murder mystery and lots of other things. The subplot about the heroine's father strikes so true and is handled very well. It's a lovely story and definitely a good read.

Regan Walker says

1st in the Heroes of Heartbreak Creek trilogy will capture your heart

Continuing on from the Runaway Brides trilogy, it's 1871 and we're back in Heartbreak Creek, Colorado

Territory as some new residents arrive: Ethan Hardesty, an architect who blames himself for three deaths in San Francisco, and Audra Pearsall, a wannabe author from Baltimore who is caring for her aging father with dementia. Meanwhile, someone is sabotaging the sluice up at the mine and men have been murdered, casting the whole town in danger.

Warner writes superbly (as always) in this Western historical with a bit of a twist: the hero wants marriage and the heroine wants a trial relationship with sleeping privileges. I loved getting to see the old gang again, especially the Scottish earl, Angus Wallace, but you can still enjoy the book if this is your first as Warner explains all the characters. Ethan has a great sense of humor and his teasing of Audra is a hoot. (I loved the analogy of trying to fit "dancing pumps on a cat.") There are moments that will have you chuckling and moments that will terrorize you as a dark menace sweeps into this sleepy town with the coming of the railroad.

A must read for fans of Heartbreak Creek and another good one from Warner! The next one up is Rafe's story, SOMETHING IN HIS SMILE, and I'm thinking at least part of it will take place in Scotland.

Kimberly Rocha~ Book Obsessed Chicks says

Audra Pearsall decides to move her "family" to Heartbreak Creek from Baltimore, Maryland after trying to cure her father's malady from some business associates. You see, since Audra's father began suffering from dementia, Audra has been rather successfully publishing works in her father's name for the Baltimore Society of Learned Historians. Instead of being caught, possibly arrested and having her father discredited, she makes the journey to the Colorado Territory to begin a new life with her father, and motley crew of her adopted family. On the way to Heartbreak Creek, Audra's wagon breaks a wheel, which leads her to meet the indomitable, Ethan Hardesty, who against his better judgement, helps the irksome but interesting Audra out of her tight spot.

The handsome Ethan Hardesty has issues of his own. Leaving a brilliant career as a talented architect and going to work for the Railroad is his way of running away from them. When he meets the quirky Audra he doesn't know which way is up, especially when his job is to try to get the Pearsalls to leave their property to the Railroad. In addition, someone has been sabotaging the work the Railroad has been making and it's Ethan's job to find out who is at fault.

Audra and her crew settle in Heartbreak Creek and attempt to make a good life, but everyday is a new trial when Audra's father can't even remember Audra is his daughter and he consistently wanders off. Ethan becomes her life-saver of sorts.

When the continual acts of vandalism on the Railroad turns into murder, with Ethan becoming a suspect, Audra finds herself confused about whether to truly trust this man she has begun to have feelings for, or to

believe that he is one of the bad guys.

Behind his Blue Eyes (The Heroes of Heartbreak Creek) by Kaki Warner is an entertaining read. Kaki is a fabulous writer and I fell in love with her books last year. I really like Audra, she has a fierce sense of loyalty to her family members, whether by blood, or just by acceptance. She always thinks of everyone else before herself and it sometimes is to her detriment. Ethan may be one of my favorite heroes. While blaming himself for a death in his past, he holds so much internally. Audra brings out the best... or the worst in him and their discovery of one another makes His Blue Eyes a really great read.

~KIMBERLY~

4 Stars (Brilliant)

♥ Vonda M. Reid ♥ says

Overall Rating: 2.85 // Action: 3.0 / Emotion: 3.0 / Romance: 3.0 / Sensuous: 0.5 / Suspense: 4.0 // Historical Flavor: 4.0 // Laughter: 2 / Grins: 4 // Tears: 0 / Teary: 0

Important Note:

This review is based upon the "Advanced Reader Copy".

Updated this review (08-11-13) because I gave it an extra point simply to be kind to an author that writes beautifully and comes across as extremely personable. It was impossible to let the 3.85 rating stand because it was not honest -- it was gratuitous. After thinking about the many gratuitous and Public Relations reviews that have caused me to dismiss such reviews as being invalid -- not something to use as a guide about whether the book is truly worth reading -- I decided to be authentic.

Behind His Blue Eyes: 2.85:

Another of Kaki Warner's well-written, entertaining books. However, the storyline was slow moving and lacked that intense emotional connection to the protagonists that makes for a truly excellent read. This is not Warner's best work.

Hero: 3.0:

Ethan Hardesty: It was difficult to understand where Ethan was coming from, thus difficult to form a cohesive connection with him. Yes, it was wonderful to read about a handsome honorable hero who wanted to make things right and to look after the people in his care, but the lack of background information about Ethan before his disastrous encounter with Eunice Eckhart three years ago left behind a feeling of incompleteness.

Heroine: 3.0:

Audra Pearsall: Did not feel a connection to this spunky, forthright heroine who was given a very full plate to handle. She {1} was the sole support of four, {2} was not willing to institutionalize her father who was suffering from dementia, {3} was falling in love with a railroad man, and {4} was learning how to become friends with the women of Heartbreak Creek.

Story Line: 4.0:

Very intricate, detailed story line featuring {1} a man who suffered a debilitating blow during his first venture into love, {2} a Baltimore woman who must move her unique family to the almost ghost town of

Heartbreak Creek, Colorado, and {3} a villain who is trying to stop the railroad from laying track through the area.

Action: 3.0:

There was not an over-abundance of the wild, wild west kind of action taking place. The book featured a more sedate, but steady pace of the everyday occurrences that were happening in currently bedeviled efforts to build a railway line through Heartbreak Creek Canyon.

Emotion: 3.0:

Sadly neither Ethan nor Audra inspired that deep emotional connection between reader and character that makes for an excellent read.

Romance: 3.0:

The romance that developed between Ethan, who was feeling unworthy, and Audra, who was more concerned with taking care of her family was nicely interwoven throughout the tale.

Sensuous: 0.5:

As expected, this book features more innuendo than sensuality. No spice or sizzle in the love scene.

Suspense: 4.0:

Warner included a variety of different intriguing threads in the story that increased the suspenseful nature of the plot; namely, {1} a vindictive former suitor, {2} a slowly-revealed story about a former lover, {3} a villain's efforts to stop the railroad, {4} a whip-wielding foreman, and {5} a biased newspaperman.

Secondary Characters: 3.0:

Warner did an admirable job of developing certain secondary characters to such a degree that they inspired laughter (Doctor Boyce) and an interest in reading their story (Rayford "Rafe" Jessup). On the other hand, there were certain other key characters that felt under-developed and under-described (Professor Pearsall, Curtis and Winnie Abraham). The inclusion of characters that were introduced in Warner's 'The Runaway Brides Trilogy' added a 'back home' flavor to the story.

Historical Flavor: 4.0:

Warner does an excellent job of describing the Colorado countryside and featuring the problems railroad men faced during the construction process. Warner successfully took readers back to 1871, but there were times when actions and words from the characters felt a bit modern.

See Wolf Bear Does Books for a more in-depth, detailed review of **Behind His Blue Eyes**.

Mary says

Buy This Book

I have read all of Kaki Warner's books to date and have enjoyed all of them. In Behind His Blue Eyes she has given readers another solid book to enjoy, but it does not quite live up to some of her earlier attempts. I do not want to give any Warner fans reasons not to buy this book. It is definitely worth every dime you would spend on it. However, I think that this book suffers slightly from her previous success in that her bar was a little high, but while the author may have nicked it with her heel on the way over she somehow managed to keep the bar from falling off.

Audra Pearsall is in trouble when this book opens. Her father is a renowned historian who has been suffering from dementia for quite some time. In order to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table, Audra has taken over writing her father's historical papers and publishing them under his name. When the Baltimore Society of Learned Historians is on the verge of discovering her deception, Audra decides it is time for her family (consisting of herself, her father and two servants) to get out of town – quickly. A letter informing her father of a legacy in Heartbreak Creek, Colorado could not have come at a more convenient time.

Ethan Hardesty is also on his way to Heartbreak Creek, for a similar reason as the Pearsall family. He is employed by the railroad that has plans to bring the rails through the town, but he is also escaping from his past. Ethan is a trained architect, but a disaster with one of his projects in California left him guilt ridden and questioning his talent and judgment. He meets Audra when her train pulls in to the Boot Creek Depot and finds himself running in to her again on the way to Heartbreak Creek. When they discover that they will both be in Heartbreak Creek together, a friendship begins to form along with the underlying physical attraction they feel for one another.

When Ethan and Audra finally arrive in Heartbreak Creek, they meet most of the characters from previous books in this series and quickly become enmeshed in the growing town. They also learn that the land that Audra's father inherited is land that the railroad needs for a right of way in order for the line to make it to the town. This puts a little bit of strain on Audra and Ethan's newly emerging friendship since it is Ethan's job to acquire that right of way and Audra is afraid that a track so close to their new home will be too dangerous for her wandering and confused father. She asks for time to consider the railroad's offer. Then vandalism begins to occur, and Audra begins to wonder if Ethan is more interested in her land than he is in her personally.

There was nothing really wrong with this book. It just lacked that something special to make it a truly great book. If anything, I think this book suffered from series overload. At times I felt I could have just as easily been in a contemporary town such as Susan Mallery's *Fool's Gold* or Christie Ridgway's *Crescent Cove*. Too many series seem to suffer from a case of Nirvana when it comes to depicting the locations of these small towns and I felt that Heartbreak Creek threatens to fall into that unrealistic trope in *Behind His Blue Eyes*. A reader sort of expects these towns to exist in contemporaries even if we complain about them, but I thought it was too jarring and really unrealistic in a historical, especially in a western. The Old West was dangerous and to give Warner credit, she did inject danger into the story and had some more realistic depictions of the plight of Chinese railroad workers, but it felt almost contrived when placed against the core residents of Heartbreak Creek.

I did like both Ethan and Audra and I felt that Warner brought their relationship along in a realistic way, however I liked Audra a bit more than I did Ethan. He was a good man with a heavy burden from his past, but some of the depictions of his torment seemed just a tad gratuitous to me and I did not warm up to him quite as much as I did Audra. She was feisty, brave and smart and Kaki Warner did a very good job of showing us the character of Audra rather than just telling us who she was. There was just a tad too much telling of Ethan's character and that made him less organic than Audra for me.

Reading is so personal and each reader has intangibles that can make or break a book. I love Kaki Warner as a writer and think she is one of the most talented romance writers to come along in the past few years. My expectations tend to be a little higher for those authors I know have the capacity to knock my socks off. I believe I expected just a bit more from this book than Warner delivered, but that does not mean this was not another winner. Readers who have never read another Warner book might rate this book higher than I did (and it is not necessary to read the other books in the series to enjoy this one). I believe that if she had developed Ethan just a little bit more, this book could have soared up toward DIK status.

Janice Hougland says

This is my first book by Kaki Warner. How could her stories have escaped my notice for so long? I can't believe how wonderful her writing is. Western historical romance at its very, very best. And the length of this story was just long enough so that the background, character building, and the story of and romance between Ethan and Audra were colorful and complete. There was even a mystery and danger that left this reader guessing for awhile until a solution was reached. Absolutely wonderful storytelling! I couldn't put the book down once I started it and even stayed up late a couple of nights to finish it. I'm so glad Ms. Warner has written numerous books so that I have a lot of reading to catch up on and enjoy. I recommend this story highly.

Gayle Pace says

REVIEW

"Another letter came today."
(first sentence)

From the RUNAWAY BRIDES trilogy, we enter 1871 in Heartbreak Creek which is Colorado territory. BEHIND HIS BLUE EYES is Book One in the trilogy. You will love it. It has that Kaki Warner's flair. There are some new characters in this book. An architect, Ethan Hardesty, who became an advance man for the railroad and Audra Pearsall, a wish I were an author. Ethan hopes to win her trust and love. She takes care of her father who has dementia. So much is going on. Sabotage, murder, a strange trial marriage. Ms. Warner has written a historical Western that she has added some twists and turns. A hero and a heroine who both want the same things but in a different way. Only two things are stopping him from making Heartbreak Creek a thriving town again. One is a vandal wanting to stop the railroad, and second, Audra, a hardheaded but lovely woman. She has the right of way to the canyon and doesn't want to sign it away. She has a good reason for not wanting a train to come so close to her home. Mr. Hardesty can be quite persuasive and quite handsome. It started out as vandalism but soon turned into murder. Now Audra doesn't know who to trust until she allows herself to trust Ethan who becomes her reluctant hero.

This book can be read as a stand alone. The author takes each character and explains their personalities and quirks. The book will make you smile and giggle a little. Then there are times when you are on the edge of your seat wondering how the town will overcome the danger they are in.

We have an old west serial killer on the loose. Is it one of the town members or someone who came in on the railroad? Will our hero and heroine find a middle ground and finally wed?

"He could love this stubborn, gentle woman. With her, he could regain the peace that had eluded him for so long, and maybe even find his redemption. With her, he might find the will to put the past behind him."
Ethan

Ms. Warner once again gave her talents to us. Another wonderful book that holds your attention and leaves you wanting more.

I would give this book 4 STARS.

I was given a complimentary copy of BEHIND HIS BLUE EYES from the author, Kaki Warner and Maic Readers for my view. No other compensation took place.

Victoria says

3/10 too many bad guys.

Ellie says

Behind His Blue Eyes, Heros of Heartbreak Creek #1, by Kaki Warner
Grade: C +

“You’re a rare creature, Audra Pearsall. A woman who gives more than she takes, and brings happiness, rather than pain, to those around her.”

Audra Pearsall never meant to do any harm but using her ill father’s data and submitting research papers under his name but when his colleagues start asking questions Audra knows she needs to escape Baltimore. With an inheritance and a house in Heartbreak Creek, Colorado Audra packs up the household and they make their way west for a new beginning. In Heartbreak things seem to fall into place and Audra finally hopes for a home with a man she loves.

Ethan Hardesty left his past as an architect back in San Fransisco and is now working to bring the railroad to Heartbreak Creek, Colorado. With a slight set back Ethan hopes to convience a landowner to let the railroad cut through but he never expected to meet the sassy and brilliant Audra Pearsall. There’s something about this woman that calls to Ethan and when her life is in danger he realizes how much he cares and how much he needs to make her his forever.

I will be completely honest the first hundred pages are so slow and uneventful that I almost DNFed this book. With that being said I did continue on and I ended up really liking the characters and the town of Heartbreak Creek. I did find myself confused at times and wondering if this is a spin off from a different series because it seemed like the reader is supposed to know all about the other couples that live in the town (this confused me so much I stopped reading and went on a google search and I came up with no answer).

There is a lot going on in this book and at times it seems too much. I loved Ethan and Audra’s romance except for the fact that Ethan takes forever to admit he likes Audra and then seems to fall for her in tow seconds. Sometimes I felt that I was on a roller coaster and just kept getting whipped around with all the emotional changes that occur. There were some twists and turns that keep things moving very quickly and kept me guessing until the very last minute. This, along with the romance, is what made the book so good and I just wish that momentum had started earlier.

All in all I did enjoy Behind his Blue Eyes and I think a lot of historical romance readers will too. I’m not sure where this series is going next but I’m hoping that the momentum from this book will carry on into the next and we get a great new adventure with some romance thrown in.

Jennifer says

2.5 stars.

This is what I've come to expect from Kaki Warner. It was an engaging read, full of witty banter and funny monologue. It was a special pleasure to see all of our old friends from the previous books, with the exception of Pru, which, to be honest, suited me just fine.

Unfortunately, this book also follow the Kaki Warner formula- one or more MCs with a traumatic past haunting them, a relationship in question, and a mystery looming over the town. This wasn't a bad book, and had I read it before the others in the series, I might have been confused about all the characters, but I would have enjoyed this more than I did.

As it was, I liked the multiple povs, the wit and humor, and the reappearance of characters from the previous books. Unfortunately, the H was a little bit of a bore, albeit a sweet and chivalrous bore, with his hang ups and annoying trauma flashbacks. I liked the h and found her to be quite admirable, but her propensity to having mishaps was a little annoying too. Plus her inability to communicate about emotions with the H was frustrating and led to a series of dumb actions on her part. In those instances, the H was a saint.

Overall a diverting read, worthy of passing your time, but not earth shattering by any means.

Mandi Schreiner says

I usually adore Kaki Warner books but this one did not work for me. The romance lacked and it was slow.

But I rec all of her previous books! :)
