



The Tracker's Dilemma

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Sergeant Heath “Tick” Hawthorn, the best tracker in Mandrake Company and the captain’s right-hand man, has been admiring microbiologist Lauren Keys from afar for months. Unfortunately, she’s dedicated to her science and doesn’t seem to have any interest in relationships. He’s not even sure she knows his name.

Determined to change that, Heath develops a surefire plan: he signs up to be a specimen in her latest study. Once she gets to know him better, he’s positive she’ll find his charms appealing.

But when he starts overhearing other people's thoughts and receiving eerie premonitions, he questions the wisdom of turning himself into a lab rat. On a mission planet-side with Lauren, they finally have some time alone together, but he’s too worried he’s turning into a freak to be charming. Further, the outing soon turns dangerous, as predators and bounty hunters show an interest in the party. If he and Lauren aren’t careful, they’ll end up dead instead of dating. Maybe Heath's plan wasn’t as surefire as he thought.

The Tracker's Dilemma Details

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From Reader Review The Tracker's Dilemma for online ebook

Jennifer says

At first I had a hard time getting into this story since the h reminded me a lot of Thatcher, the H from the second book of the series. She is not really socially adept to say the least, and ends up sounding rather judgy of people she doesn't understand...which turns out to be basically everyone. I didn't like her much. I thought the H was too sweet for her, but near the end of the story, he basically admits that he was interested in her 1) because she was one of the only non-manlike women on board, 2) brothels weren't cutting it anymore and he would have liked a real relationship, and 3) the mercenary lifestyle made him unappealing to regular women. Wow, that was the most underwhelming proclamation of amorous feelings that I've read in a long time. He basically wanted her because she was there on the ship with him, wasn't manly, and because no other nice women wanted him due to his job. All of a sudden, this became an unromantic romance and if this weren't the last book of the series, I'd be looking elsewhere for my fun space romances.

What I liked:

- 1) The alternating povs.
- 2) The funny humour and banter.
- 3) The slow burn romance. It was endearing the H was willing to wait for so long for the h to come around. Although, being stuck on a ship in space with little choices of female companionship probably helped him in this effort.
- 4) Seeing some of the other characters in the series.
- 5) There was more of a plot in this one, and the mystery of where the technodruids were was fun.

What I didn't like:

- 1) Either MC really. Neither were that compelling. I liked the H for most of the book, but his inner monologue really turned me off near the end.
 - 2) The plot could have been fleshed out a little more. I do feel like the storyline of the Fleet going after Ms. Keys to be a little thin.
-

Livvii says

I really liked this book, and was glad that we got to see Lauren and Tick get their own book, as they were two of the original characters. There was plenty of action in this book, along with with some light hearted humour. Perfect for sci-fi adventure lovers.

I have always liked Tick's character, and had hoped that we would get to hear his story at some point. I like his personality and think that he was a good, albeit interesting choice to pair with Lauren. I have never quite known what to make of Lauren's character, as we never really see that much of her, and when you do, she is not very good at social interaction. I felt that we got to understand her a lot more in this book, as well as see a slightly different side to her. It was nice to see that she does actually have a personality that extends beyond the Socially Awkward Workaholic Research Scientist. In This installment we also got to meet Lauren's sister, Hailey, who is the polar opposite to Lauren. It was interesting to see the relationship between the two sisters, and how Hailey's presence, again, brought out a different side to Lauren.

I'm sad that there are no plans for this series to continue as I would liked to have seen Striker get his own

book. I'm curious to know if there is more to him than the obnoxious irritant to people everywhere side. I also think that it would be highly entertaining for him to find a woman that really puts him in his place, or someone that brings out a different/better side of him.

I have really enjoyed this series and would certainly recommend it to anyone that loves science fiction with a great adventure and a touch of romance thrown in.

Pamela Hastings says

Loved the series!

Enjoyed the mercenaries in this series! It reminded me of pirates only futuristic. Good story lines and characters. Sad to read that there are no more books planned for Mandrake Company.

Robin says

Great Entire Series!

This is actually the first review I've made on any book or series & felt that I enjoyed it so much that I couldn't forgo the chance to tell other readers about it.

I was gripped from the start of the first installment to the Mandrake Company's series. The characters were loveable and I couldn't wait to find out what the next page, chapter, or book was going to bring. In fact, I was even disappointed at the end of book #6 that there were no further plans to write another addition to the series.

I am however looking forward to reading other books by Ruby Lionsdrake. I really enjoyed her writing style!

Tiki says

I really have enjoyed this series... and I hope there will be more in the future. I'm a total fan girl of Lindsay Buroker, so her more adult books written by 'Ruby' were a sure thing. It's best to start with book one for the full world building, and to best understand the characters. I've like "Tick" and his easy going humor since the beginning so was glad he found romance. So cute how he gained the trust and attention of the oh so serious Dr Lauren!

Erin says

I've never liked Lauren.

I didn't really like her in this one.

I absolutely HATED her sister.

Which of course made me think that the whole 'I must go save my sister, even though I don't like her, and she's stealing my work/got us in this trouble' plot just kind of annoyed me.

Which is sad that the series ended on that note for me. Though I'm sure there are people who love Lauren. I just am not one of them.

I do and did like Sargent Tick though. So it was nice to have his story.

I still really love the whole Firefly feel of the series. I'll need to go find something similar.

Giving it 4 stars for the rest of the gang and that I like Sargent Tick.

Mei says

Premise: I **LOVE** Mandrake Company series and I'm sad that the author say in the afterword that she'll not be writing any more books... :(

That said, I had such a high expectations here and I feel slightly let down...

It's the weakest book in the series and I feel sad that Lauren and Tick didn't make it out better than this...

The romance here is all on Tick's shoulders. I really don't understand what he saw in Lauren... He says himself:

Or maybe he should give up on her and wait for the day when another single woman joined the mercenary company. Not that that happened very often. Most of the women who did looked like Sergeant Hazel or Private Sahara, all muscles with a tough-as-titanium-nails attitude.

This doesn't sound like a visceral attraction, but more like a make do... Not very romantic..

Also Lauren is not attracted at all to Heath (Tick's real name), nor to any other men:

But Heath, I must tell you that I'm not interested in relationships with men.

So we have a strange situation, that could have been made interesting, but I had for a long time a sensation that they both just got together because there wasn't any other available. Not the best thing in a romance novel...

After a while, Heath was lusting after Lauren like an out-of-control teenager, and it was endearing to read his inner dialogue, but Lauren was worse than a robot!

I understand that she's a scientist, but she when was speaking like this I just wanted to slap her:

I have no urge to engage in coitus with anyone from either sex.

How they derived so much pleasure from inserting their penises into orifices, she couldn't imagine.

And she kept talking/thinking like that until the very end!!!!

Another very un-romantic thing is her unwillingness to be kissed! *Exchanging saliva* as she calls kissing!!!

OMG!!!

So, you understand why this book was a flop for me...

The three stars I'm rating it is due to all the banter of the rest of the crew and the background story, not to the romance!

Joy Conger says

Awesome

Really enjoyed Heath and Laurens story. But would love to see Hailey hire A Mandrake man and return to the home of the Druids and find love. Please keep writing this series. Love it.

Claire says

Waaaaahhhh, why is this the last book??? There are so many things left hanging at the end (Hailey's research, GalCon vs Mandrake Company, more of Lauren and Heath). Please write more!!!

Heath "Tick" Hawthorne has been a great character (and quite the character!) over the course of the series, and it was nice to see him in a starring role. He and distracted scientist Lauren are opposite in many ways, but I think they're good for each other. Lauren gives Heath someone of intelligence to talk to, someone to share the "good bits" of books and life with. And Heath can coax Lauren out of her lab and ease her way in social interactions, and discover that she does have a sense of humor. Their contrasting inner dialogue was great fun to read, with each of them having a particular way of seeing the world and reacting to it.

The background plot wasn't quite as good in this one, mainly because I feel like we never got any resolution for anything. The ESP angle is dropped, nothing really comes of the search for the druids, we don't know how the potential conflict between GalCon and the company plays out, and it ends right as Lauren and Heath are getting comfortable with one another, but before anything is declared or finalized between them. I just want more good SFR!!

Jennette says

I'm glad that Lauren was saved for last. I think I needed time to warm up to her. I know so many people that are socially usual that if she were a real person I would probably find her among my quirky friends but someone like her takes a little time to break past the outer shell and really get to know the inner person. I have enjoyed the entire series. The author has done a great job of revealing Lauren in the same slow way. The Mandrake Co flying around the universe with all their flaws and messy jobs and crew of misfits have been fun to lose myself in. I will definitely read these again.

Celestine says

Ruby Lionsdrake knows her way around a great adventure plot, and this book is a good continuation of the story line in the rest of the Mandrake series. I was happy to finally read the romance between Tick and Lauren, two characters we've seen quite a bit up to this point. Unfortunately the romance wasn't all I hoped. Tick was a little too reticent and Lauren was a robot. The bedroom talk was really....unfortunate, mainly because he was so tongue-tied and afraid to say the wrong thing and she was so esoteric that it was just uncomfortable. Once again, Sgt. Striker, Chief of Boom, gets all the laughs.

Mara says

This is the second book of hers I tried, and I couldn't finish it either. I have quite a few problems in believing this is the same author who wrote *The Emperor's Edge*. That series wasn't the best around, but it did walk on its 2 legs without wobbling.

Writing as Ms Lionsdrake seems to do something bad to this author's skill. The setting is beyond stupid, you don't become a lab rat, testing an unknown, unapproved drug because you want into the doc's pants. But the real problem was the flatness of all the book, writing, characters, plot. Depth is an unknown skill, it seems, while cliché galore is not.

At 22% when the story was slipping into even more stupidity I simply gave up.
It is really not worth my time.

Anna says

Now **this** formula I continue to enjoy. There's just enough SF worldbuilding to keep me interested, and the characters are always geekily fun. Too bad it appears this will be the last in the series.

Llaph | No Frill | No Shill says

I find that all of the gene enhancing/ESP/paranormal abilities and the storyline of how the Grenavinians did that to an extent just made me do a mental “whoa” since I don't want to stick my nose into the recent current events surrounding the start of this sort of thing. Messing with genes is a good thing if it prevents disease, but inevitably it is going to go too far and that makes me wonder wtf did scientists ever read sci-fi books and see what a mess it can turn out to be? Lol

All I can say right now is that this was a cute story. I will also say that I'm nearing burn out from all of the romance because of my binge reading of all of the author's offerings via KU....

That means I'm probably reading deeper into parts of the story than most usually do.

All of that aside finally getting Lauren and Heath's story was a nice bonus, since I thought the series was completed. However it didn't really live up to what I was expecting despite some good points. I thought his hesitancy and insecurity about what to do and not to do with Lauren was endearing. I also got a kick out of reading her arguments with herself about whether or not she wanted to do anything with him. I did think it

kinda switched pretty easily, especially after all of her protestations in previous books. It was nice to get more background about both characters though I didn't think it was really all that much since they didn't really seem to be complex characters to begin with. Also the romance was rather bland since he was the one that seemed the most excited about it all and unfortunately it kinda sounded like she was the only choice to lust after. Her scientific descriptions for anything ... I mean clinical descriptions maybe? Were pretty eh ... I think it just might've not been developed enough as a whole to make it an interesting romance.

I didn't think, compared to some of the other books in the series, that the plot was too involved in this one. I mean, the druids were a nice twist, seeing where they went after they left the space station was nice to know, and getting a better look into their history was pretty cool. However, it didn't really go anywhere besides a quick mention. Is she going to write more about them and their experiments? Time will only tell, but I'm not sure if I want to read more about that since genetic tinkering isn't something I'm too interested to read about right now.

This wasn't the least of the series for me, but it doesn't rank very high either.

Delphine Lopez says

Great reads, Highly Recommend!!!

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this series. The plots are thought-provoking, the characters enjoyable, the grammar superb (I love it when I come across words I haven't read before) The descriptions surrounding the characters pulled me in. Simply delightful series, I hope for more adventures with the Mandrake crew in the future.
