



If It Ain't Love

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In the darkest days of the Great Depression, New York Times reporter Whit Stoddard has lost the heart to do his job and lives a lonely hand-to-mouth existence with little hope of recovery, until he meets Peter, a man in even greater need of new hope.

If It Ain't Love Details

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From Reader Review If It Ain't Love for online ebook

Jenre says

This review can also be found at Brief Encounters Reviews.

Sometimes Twitter can be a marvellous thing. If the author hadn't flagged up on Twitter that she'd published this short at ARe, I would have missed this absolute gem completely. The story is set during The Great Depression of the 1930's in New York and follows Whit who, unlike many men, has a job. He's a freelance reporter for the NY Times but has lost his heart for journalism in the face of all the horrors he sees daily. After borrowing a dollar from his boss, Whit has enough money to bypass the bread lines and buy a meal and a night in a flop house where he meets Peter. Peter's not destitute, but is about to lose everything. Whit gives Peter a new lease of life in helping those who have nothing, to gain some pride, and Peter helps Whit to rediscover his talent for journalism.

There's so much I liked about this story that I doubt I will be able to fit it all into this review! Firstly the setting is poignant and realistic. We see it through Whit's jaded, almost dispassionate, eyes and in some ways that makes it all the more heartbreaking as Whit shrugs off the sights of men crying in the streets and the huge lines for food. The oppressive atmosphere has affected Whit so much that he is suffering from a form of writer's block and so he has lost everything and is trapped in a spiral of destitution he has no hope of getting out of. When he meets Peter, he's jolted out of that spiral as he firstly sees how tragedy has affected Peter, then how Peter's generous heart can bring hope to men without means to help themselves.

The fact that the main message in this story is that of hope means that what could have been a maudlin or bleak story is lifted into something much less heavy. It was proof of the skill of the author that she was able to tell the tale of The Great Depression whilst also providing a realistic romance and a happy ending for our heroes. The romantic feeling between the heroes was achingly tender and some of the best parts of the story were where the men were muddling through their feelings for each other. The historical setting was flawless, not just in the descriptions of 1930's NY but also in the way the men spoke and acted towards each other. I was immersed.

I finished the story completely wowed by the intelligent writing, vivid setting and strong characterisation. As a short story this was absolutely perfect and I couldn't recommend it highly enough. This story is free at All Romance Ebooks (although I would happily have paid money for it) so there's no excuse not to download it!

Macky says

A sweet, poignant and tender tale set during the depression. Two men brought together by circumstances beyond their control they forge a friendship that turns to romance but outside influences threaten their bond and one of them has to look at himself and his actions to put it right. More story than actual sex, although there are some tender but not overly graphic love scenes. It's beautifully written, so I'll definitely be checking out more of Tamara Allens books. A very satisfying free short story. Well worth adding to your library.

Nick Pageant says

Sweet little story set during the depression. I wish there had been a lot more to this because the writing is fantastic.

Dα?1jα says

The past few days I've heard Rihanna singing: *We found love in a hopeless place...* quite a few times, and every time it reminded me of Whit and Peter from *If It Ain't Love*, and how I never wrote a review of it to at least say how much I liked it. Well, time to rectifying that.

I really liked it.

If It Ain't Love is a memorable love story. This I know for certain because months after reading it, I can still recall it quite well. Of course, this could have something to do with the fact I read it right after a book that gave me a lot of worries, worries I hadn't gotten over before starting this. I swear, I can't count the times the thought one of the main characters would walk out into the street and get hit by a car and die crept into my mind. Luckily, nothing remotely like that happened. This wasn't written by Shonda Rhimes, after all. No, this was beautiful: love and hope found in the midst of the Great Depression. The darkness of the period, I think, was presented well. This was one of those stories that made me feel the atmosphere as if I had been there. Needless to say, this was not the best setting for falling in love, so when it happened, it was all the more precious. And I feared something might happen to ruin it (like getting hit by a car, if you remember). Only when I read the last sentence did I get to breathe a deep sigh of relief. The story was over; Whit and Peter were both still alive and well; they were together, and Manhattan could wait.

They found love in a hopeless place...

~☆~Dαni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~☆~ says

~4.25~

This is the first Tamara Allen book I've read, and I'm impressed with the quality of the writing.

Set during the American Great Depression of the 1930s, *If It Ain't Love* is at once hopeless and HOPEFUL.

Beautifully written, evocative, and historically accurate without being pedantic, this short story packs an emotional punch in under 40 pages.

If you're looking for smex galore, this is not the story, but the lack of graphic sex didn't irk me.

The story has a dreamy, floaty quality, and the physical scenes are muted and abstract. Even so, the connection between the MCs, Whit and Peter, is palpable.

The quiet intensity builds into a story of redemption and love.

Awake and alive—with someone to be awake and live for; that was all Peter wanted.

Julio Genao says

So, it went like this:

I was staring at the lovely cover, and wondering why the designer did x instead of y, and basically wishing that *I* had made it, and wondering if perhaps there were answers to my questions on the first page—

—But just a peek, right? Because I don't really have any time right now for anything, you see.

Of course, the next thing I know I'm in Depressed New York feeling this crazy compulsion to read on and on and on—because measured prose filled with compassion and wit and clever little details will do that to me.

And then it was over, and it was pretty great.

I have quibbles.

I have questions.

But mostly I have the urge to read it again.

Susan says

I'm such a fan of Tamara Allen's.

I typically don't read historicals. But, I wanted to give this a shot since her writing is so beautiful and I loved "Downtime". What a treat.

Whit and Peter meet during the Depression...and frankly...it's depressing. They find, after already forging a bond, that their paths cross in other surprising ways. I really liked the storyline. I think it would have been so much more satisfying, however, if it was a longer book and dove deeper into the topics introduced hastily in this short read (some of Whit's background, taking time to explore their attraction and relationship, more detail of Peter's life before the "accident")

But what it lacks in content (even the romance bits are a bit tame), it makes up for in Tamara Allen's gorgeous writing.

Vivian ?????? says

A vivid, poignant and hopeful story.

If It Ain't Love is a gentle, heartwarming story set during the skillfully painted scene of America during the Great Depression. Tamara Allen manages to capture the desperation and darkness of that era with such subtle yet evocative prose until even I couldn't help but feel the stench and grit of unwashed skin and sharp pangs of hunger and despair.

What really shone through for me was the absolute and powerful theme of hope. During a time where even something so simple like a bath and kind smile could make all the difference in the world, hope really is so significant, and it really does show in this book. Reading about them lifting each other from their own abyss and giving each other courage and the will to make it was so brilliant, so moving and so damn rewarding. I was invested in the two of them, their relationship and welfare the entire time.

I enjoyed this story immensely-- there seriously isn't a reason *not* to enjoy this. I found no faults, even if it didn't cross into the realms of 'love' for me. *snort* If it ain't love. Okay sorry, that was slightly lame. On a more serious note, I really think that this book is worth a try.

Rating: 4 - 4.25

Kaje Harper says

This is a wonderful, sweet, hopeful love story, set in the Depression when hope was hard to come by. The period details all ring true and the characters are very real. Short but a complete story, much heavier on the relationship development and plot than the sex, which is nice in a short. And it's free! (Thank-you Ms. Allen.) This is one I will reread.

Katrina Passick Lumsden says

One of those "pleasant surprise" reads. This is currently free on Amazon, and it's a short read, so you've got absolutely nothing to lose. And believe me when I say, it's worth the time. Fantastic atmosphere and characterization, and the prose is beautiful. Allen captured the desolate desperation many must have felt during the dark days of the Great Depression, and she used that desolation to highlight the miracle of finding love amidst ruin.

?Karlyn P? says

4.5, great little m/m romance story set in depression era Manhattan. Loved the writing voice, an author to watch.

This was a quick read at roughly 30-40 pages, but it packed quite a story. I devoured this one and really felt the chemistry and love bloom between the two leads. I especially enjoyed the setting of the Great Depression. The author did a great job of painting the background and made you feel like you are right there. I recommend it to all who enjoy romance, not just the M/M stuff. This was a steamy and passionate read, but not erotica with explicit love scenes.

Alona says

First: look at that cover!
Both formats have two of the most amazing covers in the genre!
Well done for that!

Than... Well, everything else was wonderful- The writing, the setting, the pace, the characters... Few can do it so well in under 40 pages!
Bravo Tamara Allen, bravo!

It's a beautiful short story, that takes place at the hard time of The Great Depression in New York. You can feel the depression, you can taste it! That's how good the writing is!
And into that darkness of hard times, Tamara takes this two charming characters, and give them and us, light. Shining bright light!

"...and all at once, he understood. Awake and alive-with someone to be awake and alive for."

It's FREE! (Aren't we lucky sometimes?)

READ IT!

K.Z. Snow says

Nobody -- and I mean *nobody* -- in the m/m romance genre can craft fiction like Tamara Allen. In fact, her work transcends genre boundaries, whether gay or historical. It is just-plain-superb writing. Always. By any standards.

Heather C says

don't like to read Tamara Allen because with ever book I read, that makes one less book I have left TO READ!! Her stories are so wonderful, they immediately draw me in and I care so much about what's happening to the characters...*If It Ain't Love* was no exception!

Set during the time of the Great Depression...this story was quite sad and, well, depressing! But also filled with LOVE and HOPE and a nice happy ending. Yeah, these guys will be alright.

Ami says

Story wise -- this one was quite lovely. There was this sweet tenderness between Whit, a reporter who has lost his heart and passion of his job, and Peter, a man who suffered a tragedy of himself. Their relationship was gentle and rather quiet, probably due to the time period where showing off romance between two men wasn't really possible.

As for the writing style ... this was when I hit a major bump. Tamara Allen came to me highly recommended. I had Downtime with me for years, but every single time I put it down because I felt like I cannot connect. Each time, I thought it was because I wasn't in love with historical genre. Since I was doing a personal challenge, I thought I would give Tamara Allen another try, this time trying her (FREE) short story.

After I finished, I realized, I simply didn't have chemistry with her writing. This story was only 17k but I needed several hours to finish. I put it down more than once and forcing myself rereading the paragraphs because my brain just didn't click. I believe in chemistry between reader and author's writing -- maybe due to choices of words, for example; thus, some authors have writing style that just not compatible with me.

Unfortunately, Tamara Allen is one of them.

So sadly, I must say that Tamara Allen's stories and I will never be in a relationship. I will just admire her from the distance.

Personal MM historical challenge January 2014: story #1
