



Canine comfort helps with recovery

Author Kristin von Kreisler has written before about the deep empathic nature of dogs. Now, in her new novel, “A Reason for Hope,” she shares the healing skills that specially trained dogs can deploy when dealing with victims of trauma or abuse.

Von Kreisler sets the book on the fictional island of San Julian, which bears a passing resemblance to the author’s real-life hometown of Bainbridge Island, located across Puget Sound from Seattle in Washington state.

The story features a yellow Lab named “Hope,” who has been trained to provide comfort and exhibit calming behavior throughout various settings in the local courthouse. Hope works with a couple of handlers, and this is how she comes into contact with Tessa Jordan.

Tessa is a bookmobile librarian and in her off hours, she is the doting care provider to a local colony of feral cats. She is in her 30s and single, and both her mom and best friend are telling her she should develop more of a social life. Because San Julian is not exactly a hotbed of dating prospects, she submits her

profile to a website called NWSingles.

Not knowing exactly what to expect, she is pleasantly surprised to get a quick response from a local college professor. Tessa already knows who Nicholas Payne is because he’s running for local office in a special election, and when their first date goes pretty well, she agrees to a second.

But the evening does not go as Nick had suggested it would, and afterwards Tessa is disoriented and upset. She grapples with the idea that she may have been assaulted, but finds it hard to believe that someone of such local prominence and with political ambitions would attempt such a thing. And if she can’t even be sure that anything untoward happened, why would anyone else believe her?

When Tessa finally summons up the courage to go to the police, Hope is brought in to provide warmth and solace as Tessa is interviewed by a female detective in the prosecutor’s office.

Eventually Tessa meets Will Armstrong, the attorney assigned to her case, who also happens to be Hope’s primary handler.

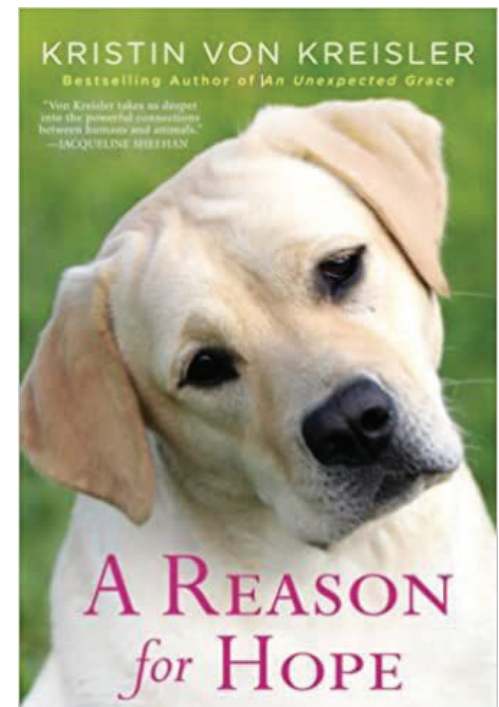
The dog continues to provide her profes-

sional canine comforting skills as Tessa moves through the difficult steps of group therapy, pressing charges and testifying in court.

“A Reason for Hope” has some “meet cute” ingredients, but the story’s core is #MeToo, and the author firmly adheres to Tessa’s quest for justice and healing. This book definitely belongs to the procedural, not romance, genre — there are gritty details and difficult compromises along the way. The story’s resolution is realistic rather than starry-eyed, and hopeful rather than outright happy.

But, as the title conveys, hope is an essential ingredient of this story. And it should be noted that while Tessa and Will are the major human players in this novel, von Kreisler also accords a fair amount of ink to the thought processes of the title character, the canine embodiment of hope.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at baralrmcm@gmail.com.



This week's book

'A Reason for Hope' by Kristin von Kreisler
Kensington Books – 336 pp – \$15.95

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