

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2009

Tiny Canines Take a Big Bite Out Of Crime - Marcia James

I am beyond excited to welcome Author Marcia James to the Backseat to kick off Going to the Dogs on RITBS. Don't miss her movie review of Must Love Dogs Posting [HERE](#).

Readers ask me how I chose Smokey, a Chinese crested hairless dog, as my logo (and virtual pet!). Smokey played an important role in my first book, *At Her Command*—as a mini-drug-sniffing DEA dog/partner for my heroine. If you think toy dogs can't fight crime, let me tell you what I discovered in my research for that book:

Tiny Canines Take a Big Bite Out Of Crime

Move over German shepherds and Doberman pinchers! There's a new breed of crimefighter on the street. Law enforcement agencies are adding toy dogs to their K-9 units. No ten-pound weaklings, these miniature mutts have the same keen senses as their larger brothers, combined with the ability to search smaller, tighter spaces for everything from drugs to explosives.



The partnership between police and specially-trained dogs has a long, proud history. In 1888 in England, two bloodhounds were used to search for Jack the Ripper. And large breeds, such as Labrador retrievers, have been trained for everything from crowd control to cadaver recovery. It's not surprising these valiant dogs have found their way into fiction, such as romantic suspense author Iris Johansen's search-and-rescue dog and mystery author Virginia Lanier's tracking bloodhounds.



In the early 1960s, South American officers chose smaller dogs to search ships for smuggled coffee. And the Belgian Malinois, a lighter, quicker version of a German shepherd, has been used by the military for years. But toy dogs were deemed too fragile for crimefighting until recently.



U.S. Custom's officials employ beagles to sniff luggage for banned items, praising the poochs' pleasant dispositions. Law enforcement agencies, sued by suspects who claim large K-9 dogs damaged their property, are considering smaller breeds, too. But an Ohio police department holds the record for the tiniest drug-sniffing canine: six-pound Midge, a Chihuahua-rat terrier mix.



Midge, who has her own tiny vest and goggles for riding on the sheriff's motorcycle, has been a public relations phenomenon. Adults, including county jail prisoners, ask to pet her, and she's a hit at local schools. Midge shows youngsters you don't have to be big to make a difference.

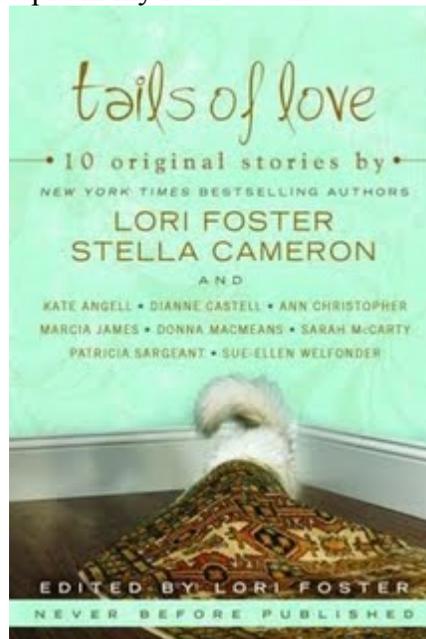


Many officers, however, are embarrassed to have a tiny K-9 partner, finding the mutts un-macho. The potential for humor in such a situation proved irresistible to me. When I was writing *At Her Command*, I gave my DEA agent heroine a petite drug-sniffing dog.

Smokey goes undercover at a D.C. sex club with his mistress, and the villains don't suspect such a cute pet could be a threat.



Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, since Chinese Crested dogs have dominated the national Ugliest Dog Contest for several years. But Smokey's unusual appearance is part of his appeal. And the talented canine plays an important role in both the book's suspense and romance. As a reader, I've always enjoyed animal matchmakers who have a hand...er, paw in the hero and heroine's happily-ever-after. I look forward to Smokey and his littermates playing Cupid in my future books.



Smokey's cousin, Buddy, is the matchmaker in my story, "Rescue Me", in the Berkley benefit anthology, *Tails Of Love*. This book features romantic stories by ten authors, and all of the authors' and agents' proceeds are being donated to the Animal Adoption Foundation, a no-kill animal shelter in Ohio. Since its release in June, *Tails Of Love* has raised \$10,000 for the shelter.

Do you enjoy reading books or watching movies featuring matchmaking or crimefighting animals? I'd love to hear about your favorite animal characters. And I'll randomly choose one of the commenters on this blog post to receive a free download of *At Her Command*. Thanks for stopping by!

PS: Smokey says it's okay with him if your favorite animal character is feline. But for those who love dogs, Smokey suggests you check out a new mystery series by Spencer Quinn, written from the point-of-view of a canine PI named Chet. The first book in the series is titled, *Dog On It*.



Marcia James writes hot, humorous romances and finished in 11 RWA contests before selling her first comic romantic suspense, *At Her Command*, to Cerridwen Press. In June 2009, her short story appeared in *Tails of Love*, a Berkley anthology, along with stories by nine other authors. Marcia is a marketing consultant, who also presents author promotion workshops. In her eclectic career, she has shot submarine training videos, organized celebrity-filled events and had her wedding covered by *People Magazine*.

After years of dealing with such sexy topics as how to safely install traffic lights, Marcia is enjoying “researching” her novels' steamy love scenes with her husband and hero of many years. Please visit her Web site at www.MarciaJames.net

POSTED BY TERRY KATE AT 6:45 AM 0 COMMENTS