



## Cupid on the Loose

**John J. Jacobson**

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Comedy stirs between like-minded writers and meddling matchmakers in John J. Jacobson's romance novel *Cupid on the Loose*, about Californians who bond over Shakespeare.

Billy is an aspiring novelist with a penchant for old-fashioned love. When he attends a local production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he meets Kari, a flight attendant who also writes and whose wit and aesthetic taste rival Billy's own. The jubilant pair meet for dates at coastal sites, theaters, and restaurants. But minor misunderstandings ensue as each tries to pretend they aren't as smitten as they are. Meanwhile, Billy's affable grandparents, who raised him, ask him for details about his love life; they want him to find a partnership like theirs.

Lighthearted insights into Billy's and Kari's thoughts about each other combine with modern dating concerns, such as how long to wait before responding to text messages. Frustrating advice from their friends leads to unnecessary heartache. An occasional narrator comments on the couple's story, enhancing their silly plight, and mild intrigue gathers around how they might untangle their problems.

Much of the humor derives from snowballing events: One sequence involves cat allergies and pet surgery; in another, a jailhouse bard chimes in with relationship advice after Billy goes to extremes to gain experience for his writing. Indeed, Billy's dramatic impulses force his grandmother to intervene with an orchestrated retreat at a lodge; its enchanting grounds inspire stage-worthy confusion and a meet-cute that's complete with aphrodisiac mints. Told with sometimes hyperbolic panache, this is a fun novel about learning to be honest.

Recalling Shakespearean antics, the romance novel *Cupid on the Loose* is about a star-crossed couple navigating shenanigans to reach love.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2025)

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