



# Tepper Isn't Going Out: A Novel

By Calvin Trillin

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## Tepper Isn't Going Out: A Novel By Calvin Trillin

BONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Calvin Trillin's *Quite Enough of Calvin Trillin*.

Murray Tepper would say that he is an ordinary New Yorker who is simply trying to read the newspaper in peace. But he reads while sitting behind the wheel of his parked car, and his car always seems to be in a particularly desirable parking spot. Not surprisingly, he is regularly interrupted by drivers who want to know if he is going out.

Tepper isn't going out. Why not? His explanations tend to be rather literal: the indisputable fact, for instance, that he has twenty minutes left on the meter.

Tepper's behavior sometimes irritates the people who want his spot. ("Is that where you live? Is that car rent-controlled?") It also irritates the mayor—Frank Ducavelli, known in tabloid headlines as Il Duce—who sees Murray Tepper as a harbinger of what His Honor always calls "the forces of disorder."

But once New Yorkers become aware of Tepper, some of them begin to suspect that he knows something they don't know. And an ever-increasing number of them are willing to line up for the opportunity to sit in his car with him and find out.

Tepper Isn't Going Out is a wise and witty story of an ordinary man who, perhaps innocently, changes the world around him.

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## Tepper Isn't Going Out: A Novel By Calvin Trillin Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

New York City and America's car culture smash together in Calvin Trillin's *Tepper Isn't Going Out*, a humorous tale of the urban quest for an open parking space. When a mailing-list broker, Murray Tepper, decides to spend his days plugging meters so he can sit in his car reading newspapers and waive off suitors hopeful of gaining his spot, little does he know that his odd behavior (even by New York standards) will set off a media buzz, provide him with cult-hero status, and incur reproach from the paranoid, dour Mayor Frank Ducavelli, who focuses on curtailing Tepper's "abuse" of the parking meter system.

Granted, the plot of this novel is quite thin, but, while not leaving you in stitches, Trillin provokes many smirks and smiles with his wit. For instance, he writes of magazines titled *Beautiful Spot: A Magazine of Parking* and the potential of *Spin: The Magazine of Salad Drying*. When Tepper suggests that his friend Jack leave his car's flashers on while parked illegally, Jack responds:

And draw attention to myself? Not a chance. I always park in front of hydrants. The secret is to park smack in front of them rather than just too near them. You have to go all the way. If you're smack in front of them, the cop rolling down the street can't see that there's a hydrant there at all. You have to be brazen. That's my motto, in parking and in life: be brazen.

Trillin's book should appeal to commuters and city dwellers everywhere, and anyone else looking for a chuckle. --*Michael Ferch*

### From Publishers Weekly

Trillin is a highly accomplished storyteller as well as a humorist and memoirist, and this oddly titled novel is by far his funniest and sunniest yet. It's a quintessentially New York comedy (and how pleasant to see those words in conjunction again) revolving around Murray Tepper, a quiet, good-humored man whose one oddity is his passion for parking on Manhattan streets. His knowledge of arcane New York parking rules is encyclopedic, and he likes nothing better than to park legally and sit in his car reading the paper. This irritates countless other drivers who think he is about to leave a desirable spot, and the title refers to his quirky determination to stay just where he is. Paradoxically, people begin to gravitate to him, to sit with him in the car and tell him their troubles; they even line up to do so. This in turn irritates the mayor (shades here of pre-crisis Giuliani), who accuses Tepper of fomenting disorder on the streets. Such a conflict becomes the stuff of tabloid headlines, and next, of course, is the offer of a book contract and a TV show. Nothing much happens beyond this, and the plot is resolved with calm good sense, but along the way Trillin captures dozens of pitch-perfect New York moments, in restaurants, in a loutish literary agent's office and in the quaintly old-fashioned business where Tepper works (he runs a mailing-list service and is a genius at perceiving the odd connections between people, where they live and what they buy). Trillin's book is the best tonic for post-September 11 blues imaginable. Agent, Lescher and Lescher, Ltd. 8-city author tour. (Jan. 15). Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

### From Library Journal

Here is an odd package indeed by the noted humorist and contributing columnist to *The New Yorker*. It tells the story of mailing list broker Murray Tepper, a man who grabs choice parking spots on the streets of New York City and sits in the car letting the time run out on parking meters while reading newspapers. That's about all there is to it by way of an intelligible plot, and laying it out in that manner makes it sound as thin as a palm frond. However, by dint of Trillin's fertile and humorous imagination, the book emerges as a

refreshing and completely likable jape. Our time-killing, newspaper-reading hero becomes the man of the hour. He is an inspiration to some, a pain in the neck to others, and a thorn in the side of the mayor, who wishes to have him prosecuted as a public nuisance. The novel is, admittedly, a trifle, but who is the reviewer to be scornful of innocent fun in this gray-skied world? For all popular fiction collections. [Sadly, Trillin's beloved wife, Alice, muse of his popular *Alice, Let's Eat*, died of heart failure on September 11. Ed.] A.J. Anderson, GSLIS, Simmons Coll., Bosto.

- A.J. Anderson, *GSLIS, Simmons Coll., Boston*

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#### **Maria Green:**

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