

★ **Duty to Warn****Sara Kersting**

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Sara Kersting's *Duty to Warn* is a finely tuned, suspenseful chase story.

Psychologist David Malden has been working with a patient, Robert Percy, during his off hours. When Percy suddenly returns to rural Michigan, Malden fears the worst. He becomes convinced that Percy, a troubled factory worker, is seeking revenge for his past in the foster care system. Malden enlists the help of a colleague, Sonja Nielsen, and uses an incomplete list from his treatment notes to stop Percy. In attempting to help Percy, the two psychologists grapple with their own troubled pasts: Malden has a mentally ill daughter and a failing marriage; Nielsen is haunted by her brother's suicide.

The novel deftly weaves between its three leads' perspectives. These shifts between people and through time are jarring in a way that mimics Percy's recollections. Each character's section shines and is full of personality. Malden maintains professional and clinical detachment; Nielsen has a cold exterior but an eager desire to help; Percy's fractured thoughts have a childlike innocence.

The author draws upon her career in the mental health field to great effect. Professional jargon is eschewed for a taut narrative that offers up ample information without hampering the tense plot's momentum, in which it's never quite clear what Percy intends to accomplish by going home.

Secondary subplots show Malden and Nielsen as dynamic and painfully real people. They struggle with their own pasts, highlighting a recurring theme of "reconciling our actions with who we want to be ... or who we are trying to be." The two psychologists are not perfect; while they want to help others, they must first help themselves. *Duty to Warn* is captivating.

JOHN M. MURRAY (November/December 2018)

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