

Justice and Closure

Daniel Pastre

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With every chapter a cliffhanger, Justice and Closure will find an audience with lovers of suspense, action, and romance.

When new evidence comes to light, Detective Nick Shaw takes control of a cold case and tracks down the killer of sixteen-year-old Jamie McMillan. Excitement, ambition, and mystery, mostly in the first half of the book, make *Justice and Closure* a captivating read. Daniel Pastre's skill in creating tension both between and within characters drives the plot forward.

The story begins in Verde River, Arizona, where good guy Nick and bad guy Charles Thurston work and reside. A cryptic letter with no signature is brought to the police station, revealing that its writer murdered young Jamie. It has been several years since her disappearance, but Nick is determined to find her killer and bring him to justice.

When the story shifts locales to El Salvador midway through the book, the setting remains equally energetic and developed, though the trip is more of a surfing vacation for Nick than a work venture. This decreases the believability of the plot, as he becomes distracted from the original mission about which he was so passionate. Pastre's apt descriptions of settings—from witnesses' homes and police stations to the Arizona landscape and El Salvador beaches—easily conjure up images, as do depictions of characters' appearances.

Cliffhangers at the end of chapters succeed at making the book suspenseful. Each of the characters is unique and compelling. Nick, especially, is a protagonist to root for, except when he ogles other women while in an exclusive relationship. His courting of Lacey progresses well over the course of the novel. The slow courtship seems reasonable, given that Nick's wife is recently deceased. This history informs his present ventures and makes him a likable character, notably when his emotionally charged past creates tension in his relationship with Lacey.

The character of Patty (Thurston's ex-wife), though, is sometimes inconsistent, as she is often seen blushing at compliments on her appearance despite seeming to be a confident, strong, and self-aware woman. Thurston, too, is not quite as realistic as he could be, being nearly too bad to be true. This does, however, make Nick and Patty's fight for justice all the more powerful.

Some sections of the text elaborate on a character's backstory and are told through exposition rather than shown through dialogue or brief asides. These slight transitions are not always noticeable, so it is occasionally difficult to discern if the narrative is describing the present day or the past. Overall, however, the writing is generally clear and engaging.

The identity of Jamie's killer is quite apparent from the beginning of the novel, detracting from the suspense of the mystery but making it clear that the whodunit aspect of the book is not the point. As the title suggests, it is Nick's bringing of the killer to justice and his journey to finding closure after his wife's death that make up the meat of the story. With the first half offering a strong mystery and the second half consisting of Nick chasing the killer—and

experiencing lots of sexual tension—*Justice and Closure* will find an audience with lovers of suspense, action, and romance.

AIMEE JODOIN (June 3, 2014)

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