

Justice in the Land of the Midnight Sun

Michael L. Kryder

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This novel is a wilderness adventure that will appeal to those who appreciate stories with a focus on the outdoors.

Michael L. Kryder's *Justice in the Land of the Midnight Sun* is an appealing adventure in which a man, his daughter, and his friends confront lawlessness and terror in Alaska.

The book is constructed as a series of anecdotes, most of which feature Dave Warren, and while there's no clear narrative path that the protagonist follows, the anecdotes are connected thematically. With the organizing principle is that of an ethical man standing against a deteriorating moral code, rough justice is part of Warren's world, and the actions that surround him are thrilling.

Warren's daughter, Heather, is a zoologist who takes center stage as the novel opens. With colleagues, Heather pursues a man-killing bear in Montana's Lewis and Clark National Forest. These scenes include some beautiful depictions of the wilderness, and of humanity's place in it. Her father's adventures follow this chase, with focus given to his personal life; his work for an oil company; and his half-wolf, half-Labrador, Beardog, with whom his interactions are realistic and affecting.

The text devotes a lot of time to exposition and carries an omniscient point of view. While this device works well during action scenes—a bear attack is particularly vivid—at other times it leads to text that seems reportorial rather than illustrative. With the anecdotes being relatively short and distinct, the book holds attention. The adventure-filled anecdotes are believable, the sort of action in which an Average Joe can see themselves.

Warren is a likable protagonist, nuanced and aware of his own flaws. Heather is shown as a modern woman who loves the outdoors. Heather is featured in more than one element, and her realistic depiction adds much to the novel's appeal. Red, Warren's Vietnam buddy and the chief of the Alaska State Troopers, is a stalwart friend and an officer not afraid to push limits, but he is still seen mostly as a reflection of Warren's perception. Warren's new wife, My Linh, functions most as a lover, and her inclusion leads to several graphic sex scenes. Other minor characters are role players, but the bit parts fit nicely in the book. Even the one-dimensional bad guys that Warren, his daughter, and his friends confront—poachers, kidnappers, drug smugglers, and Islamic terrorists—serve the story well.

Warren shows a father's pride affection for Heather. That is part of the book's appeal, but the story notes that Heather is one of three children from Warren's marriages. Only one other, Rachel, gets minor notice. Such absences are strange. Puzzling, too, are muddled details, such as the conflation of Navy SEALs with Army Special Forces.

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GARY PRESLEY (May 26, 2016)

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