



Kane Moss: A Tale of Reckoning

C. D. Tuttle

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This western adventure hearkens back to classics of the genre and is great escapist fun.

With his 1870s western *Kane Moss*, debut novelist C. D. Tuttle hearkens back to great western films, delivering a tense story most reminiscent of John Ford's classic *The Searchers*.

Thematically, Tuttle's novel exemplifies the quest. The tale opens with a bloody raid on an isolated community deep in southern Wyoming's Medicine Bow Mountains. A villain called Klatch, who, with his gang of Texas-Mexico border ruffians, is trekking home from Montana territory, raids the village of Snowy Point. What Klatch doesn't know is that his gang has pillaged a town made up mostly of rugged, tough-minded mountain men and their descendants.

Seeking vengeance, the town dispatches Kane Moss. Kane travels with a pack that includes his friend Griz, a momma's-boy mountain man who "looks like a grizzly in clothes"; Cade, an outdoorsman with a deadly shot; and Sarah Jane, a beautiful, tough-minded tomboy. Under Kane's dogged leadership, the mountain posse trails Klatch's gang through Colorado, New Mexico, and across the Rio Grande, sniping, fighting, and encountering more than one "crossed-eyed, liquored-up bonehead" wanting to draw down.

It's a venerable plot, and is believably rendered. Many incidents—including raids by Native Americans who have no other way to fight white incursions—are straight out of the history books. Absent an active conscience, Klatch is a slightly over-the-top villain. He is presented as so dangerous that even his own men fear him too much to shoot him.

The tale is mostly rendered chronologically, though one time slip forward early on causes a narrative hiccup. The text contains minor errors in grammar and syntax, as well as some geographical confusion, though nothing severe enough to greatly dampen enjoyment. The settings are beautiful and picturesque, well described from the high country of Wyoming, through the great sand dunes of southern Colorado, and across the Texas high plains to the raging Pecos River.

Living off of jackrabbits and jerky, the characters are straight from the black-and-white cowboy movie era, less nuanced or conflicted than modern genre heroes. The tall, rugged, loyal, and shy Kane is a hero to root for, while Griz, a great, hairy bear of a man, is nearly silent, forever indestructible, and consistently lovable. As the hard-worn posse returns to their home at Snowy Point, there's a hint that the sparks between Kane and Sarah may lead to romance, but the author also contrives a conclusion that may prove a jumping off point for another Kane Moss adventure.

Ideally suited for fans of paperback westerns or John Wayne classics, *Kane Moss* is a good choice for a weekend of escapism.

GARY PRESLEY (February 22, 2016)

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