

Never Name the Dead

D. M. Rowell

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A Kiowa woman returns to her Oklahoma reservation in D. M. Rowell's ominous novel *Never Name the Dead*.

Summoned home by an unusual phone call, Mud takes leave from her Silicon Valley job to meet her grandfather, James. James is a tribal elder, artist, and storyteller who's been accused of stealing a Jefferson Peace Medal from the Kiowa museum. But Mud can't locate James, and there's a bludgeoned body inside of his house. Working within these conundrums, Mud tries to discover what happened, as well as to determine possible motives for the murder and the theft. At the same time, she is forced to reexamine her ancestral ties and her place within her community.

Mud is a level-headed heroine who weighs all of her decisions, coming to conclusions at a gradual pace. As an investigator, she's an amateur, but a capable one who knows to revisit people's statements for inconsistencies. She has brushes with danger, and she is forced to interact with bickering council elders and former high school classmates who are engaged in alarming activities—perhaps because of the poverty on the reservation. Mud's cousin, who is more like a brother to her, supports her efforts throughout; he's a steady and compelling presence.

Mud's investigation leads to intriguing questions about how legacies are valued and devalued. Though she's hesitant to decide where her future belongs, her reawakened memories imbue her with strength. She incorporates her tribal traditions into her classic sleuthing and clever deductions, even as her community works to preserve Kiowa art and culture from profiteers. And Mud is suspicious of oil men, as are others; their outrage over the environmental damage caused by fracking simmers.

Set on tribal lands, *Never Name the Dead* is a murder mystery whose crimes are driven by greed.

KAREN RIGBY (November / December 2022)

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