

Somewhere on the Dark Side of the ID

V. Miles Capiston

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Somewhere on the Dark Side of the Id is a unique love story with a psychological edge.

V. Miles Capiston's novel *Somewhere on the Dark Side of the Id* is a dark and twisted romance driven by one man's ego.

In a Portland coffee shop, two complete strangers, Robb Michael and Joanna, are desperate to meet each other. Neither knows what drives that desire. When Robb Michael "kidnaps" Joanna, their unique relationship begins. Robb Michael is certain Joanna can fulfill the requirements for his mysterious "projects"; Joanna is uncertain what the projects are, but she knows she is intrigued.

Though other characters continually describe Robb Michael as likable, his egotistical nature proves to be off-putting. Two of his journals—one written for his children, the other written to Joanna—are introduced as a means of exploring his nature; they help explain his motives, but reinforce the perception that he is self-centered and desperate.

Despite being one of the main characters, Joanna is passive. Events and actions happen to her, and she rarely pushes for answers or functions actively. Little information is provided about her past, and she does not develop much over the course of the novel. She is an affable but unknowable lead.

Joanna's passivity as a character impedes much of the dialogue between her and Robb Michael. She acquiesces to his perspective in nearly every scene, and there are no disagreements or friction. Occasionally there are the beginnings of a push-pull dynamic, but such potential fizzles away.

Sex and sexuality are a central theme, with most of the novel's relationships focusing on sex and, at times, sexually depraved behavior. This directness, especially around taboo acts, can be refreshing.

The novel's structure is particularly unique. Its first portion is straightforward and chronological, seen predominantly through Joanna's point of view. The second portion reiterates the story from the first half—but through Robb Michael's journals, written from the point before he met Joanna and into their present. Joanna's present experiences break through as she reads the journal, helping to move the story toward its conclusion.

The final section of the book is only a few pages long. It contains another journal, again going over earlier parts of the story, and concerns someone named Emily, who had made a brief, unassuming appearance earlier in the novel, only to disappear. It creates a neatly tied-up conclusion to all relationships and projects, many of which were alluded to earlier in the novel, though the repeated story lines also rob the conclusion of its surprises.

Within the novel's short chapters, time and scenery shift at a rapid pace, and nothing is ever quite as it seems. Settings that include secret doors and hidden passageways ultimately prove more complex than the characters that inhabit them.

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JENNIFER MILLER (September 27, 2017)

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