

Tuesday Night Requiem: #5 Nurse Kit Carson's Knife & Gun Club

L. S. Collison

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Tuesday Night Requiem is a polarized modern-day Western novella with a tender twist in which a nurse battles to die with dignity.

In L. S. Collison's contemporary Western novella *Tuesday Night Requiem*, renegade health workers square off with corporate healthcare enemies.

Stuffed in a closet in the Wellmart hospital where she works, Kit, a nurse, waits out her fatal sickness. Hearing about her plight, Balmy, whom Kit helped to escape sex trafficking, returns to help her—and to expose the man behind the illegal trade. Meanwhile, Kit's colleagues plot to rescue her in the hopes that she can die in peace.

In the book's opening, a gunman prepares for a day of killing off old people in Kit's town; from here, the book bursts with potential disasters. Its theatrical scenes build a sense of impending doom: Kit's children relieve their anxiety with an outing to an dodgy pool hall; Balmy plans a secret meeting with a reporter to expose the leader of the sex ring; Tonto explores alternatives to Western medicine; and Pancho Villa awaits his chance to carry Kit out of the closet. Elsewhere, an aspiring businesswoman hopes the Wellmart CEO will die, as she wants his job.

The book reimagines Western sets from a modern perspective, shifting their attention to a medical crisis and the cutthroat environment of contemporary health care. Danger is always on the horizon; even Covid-19 plays a part in the text. Still, in Western form, most of the characters carry weapons, and function in a contest between renegades and powerful businesses.

Balmy's investigative prowess, Pancho Villa's winning smile, Tonto's vibrant personality, and Kit's adventurous children fill out the outlaw side with charm. Kit's centrality in the hearts of her friends and family is undergirded by her selfless, tender thoughts as she waits in the closet. The villains' side is less varied, and includes a pimp posing as a sheriff, the Wellmart CEO, and his hopeful replacement. They're greedy and spiteful first. Meanwhile, the lone gunman lurks in the background as a reminder of the stakes of the dramatic showdown; the audience is pushed to choose a side and a point of view.

The novella is forceful about its good-versus-evil message. Nuance is absent as it emphasizes the differences between what's right and what's wrong. Spare writing and episodic action sequences contribute to its speed, and its tone is strident and political. Rather than working toward a violent showdown, though, the book's end features healing and hope that the good guys will prevail.

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MARI CARLSON (April 23, 2021)

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