

To Be Marquette

Sharon Dilworth

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Sharon Dilworth's *To Be Marquette* is an absorbing coming-of-age novel about a woman's freshman year in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

In the 1970s, Molly chooses a college in Marquette to escape the freeways and factories of her hometown in suburban Detroit. Eager to "be rid of the person I had been and to embrace someone completely different," Molly is enamored with the vast, deep blue of Lake Superior and the remote natural beauty of the UP. Smart, inquisitive, and strong-willed, Molly befriends fellow students from her ecology class. Nicknamed the Crusoes, these men are "modern castaways," with straggly hair, faded jeans, and untucked flannel shirts that smell like campfire. Molly is also drawn to Dr. Robinson, their engaging, idealistic ecology professor, who admires Molly's strength and curiosity.

Molly grows in discernment and self-acceptance as she copes with a reclusive roommate, pursues new friendships, and learns difficult lessons about trust and betrayal. She is inspired by Dr. Robinson's lectures, which deepen her appreciation for the UP: "In Marquette, I was a steward of the earth. Everything seemed possible." Further, the novel captures the period's unrest as Dr. Robinson encourages students to protest Project ELF, a top-secret government program that would embed military communication lines in the UP's bedrock.

When Dr. Robinson is arrested under mysterious circumstances, the Crusoes' suspicions about CIA surveillance add intrigue that goes unresolved. Then the novel skips forward ten years, when Molly's life has "stalled" post-graduation. Though she lost touch with her friends and her sense of purpose, she remains in Marquette, determined to find out what happened to Dr. Robinson and her friends.

Evoking the beauty of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, *To Be Marquette* is a captivating novel with an introspective heroine.

KRISTEN RABE (September / October 2024)

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