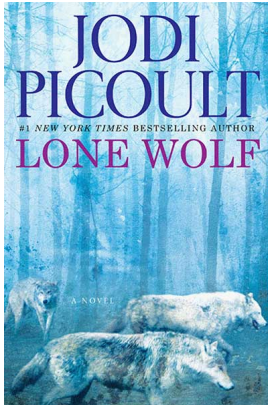


Picoult tackles tricky end of life issues

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
Tuesday, 06 March 2012 12:05



Author Jodi Picoult has made a solid career writing books about life's more emotional quandaries.

She's tackled the medical ethics ("My Sister's Keeper"), a Columbine-like shooting ("19 Minutes"), sexual orientation and reproductive rights ("Sing You Home").

In her latest offering, Picoult dives headfirst into the end of life dilemma.

Luke Warren, a naturalist who specializes in wolves, and his 17-year-old daughter, Cara, survive a horrific car accident. Cara is left with several broken bones. Luke suffers irrevocable brain damage and is on life support.

Luke's 24-year-old son, Edward, who fled the family years ago, is called home from Thailand by his mother, Georgie.

Georgie divorced Luke and has moved on with her life, and although Cara lives with her father, Georgie remains involved in her life.

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When the doctors attending Luke decide he will never come out of a coma, it's up to Edward – or so he believes – to make the life-ending decision for his father.

Cara, however, has other ideas. She turns to her stepfather, a lawyer, to intercede, and thus begins a legal battle no one can win.

Picoult doesn't stray from her successful formula: She gives everyone's point of view, letting her readers decide for themselves where they stand.

Luke has spent most of his adult life researching, taking care of and living with wolves. His lifestyle didn't come without sacrifice, however. His wife left the marriage because she couldn't compete with a pack of wolves. His son left after a bitter argument stemming from the divorce.

Luke's part of the book, which delves into his lifelong obsessions into minute detail, relies heavily on the research of Shaun Ellis, an English animal re-searcher whose "outside the box" methods have been called into question.

Cornelia H. Huff, who says she is a wolf educator and writer of wolf curricula for teachers and non-formal educators, left her thoughts on amazon.com:

"I am frankly infuriated by the sheer nonsense in the 'Luke' segments of the book. In an effort to debunk the myths about the wolf as 'the beast of waste and desolation,' Picoult has created an equally unscientific, inaccurate and ultimately harmful portrayal of wolves and of wolf packs. Why did she not go to the books and articles by the renowned researchers and scientists like L. David Mech, founder of the International Wolf Center – a man who has spent over 50 years studying wolves and sharing his knowledge with the general public? What about the other science-based wolf education organizations that have web sites crammed with solid information about the biology and ecology of wolves? They include the Wolf Conservation Center, the California Wolf Center and the Red Wolf Coalition."

While I can't begin to speak on the gravity of Picoult's take on the lives of wolves, she does a good job showing readers the anguish families face when end of life decision must be made.

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Picoult posted her feelings on her website: "My position is, have a conversation long before you ever find yourself in that situation, because you will be doing the greatest service to your loved ones by not making them make the decisions for you."

With this, I totally agree. As for continuing to read Picoult, I think I'll look closely at the issue she's tackling before I decide to review every new title.

For more from Picoult, visit her website, www.jodipicoult.com