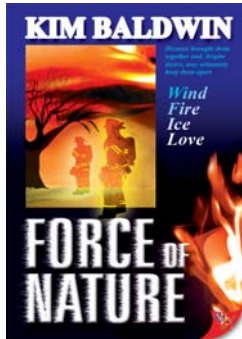


Book Review: October 2005

by Kathi Isserman (reviewer at [IGW](#))



Force of Nature

Kim Baldwin

ISBN: 1-933110-23-6

Trade paper, 240 pp, \$15.95

September, 2005

Lesbian Fiction/Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Independent Gay Writer

Ronald L. Donaghue

Editor-in-Chief

Heroes can be defined as women who do extraordinary acts in the face of danger and sometimes heroes are women who overcome adversity in their own lives. Kim Baldwin's *Force of Nature* encompasses both kinds of heroes.

Force of Nature begins with explosive action. Gable McCoy is working as a volunteer firefighter when she is caught outdoors with a twister barreling towards her. She narrowly escapes and when she emerges from the tornado, the scene all around her is devastation. This is when Gable meets Erin Richards who is trapped in her basement shower with no house left above her, just the remains of one. Gable spends a long night on the other side of the bathroom door comforting Erin as they wait for more help. Erin and Gable become fast friends after their shared experience. As they turn into best friends, Gable finds that she has more than friendly feelings toward Erin who has recently emerged from a bad marriage. Throughout this gripping story Gable fights these feelings until she can no longer contain her powerful emotions towards Erin.

As I read *Force of Nature* non-stop from beginning to end, the story had me on the edge of my seat with the multiple action scenes of firestorms and heroic rescues. They are descriptive, visual, and I could even feel and smell the twister coming. Throughout these search and rescue efforts, Baldwin shows Gable's continuing struggle to deny her attraction to Erin. Gable's aching desire and her attempts to hide her sexual orientation from Erin, for fear of losing their friendship, are convincing.

Force of Nature has rapid-fire search and rescue scenes, and Baldwin gives the reader good insight into firefighting throughout the story. She blends the romance into the plot so it complements rather than detracts from the action while building Gable's angst so that we as the reader suffer along with Gable as she hides her torturous secret. The ending is potent and heroic while giving us sweet release.

With *Force of Nature* Kim Baldwin has created another compelling read filled with multiple conflicts that interconnect well. With only her second novel, she is fast becoming a force as a lesbian fiction author.

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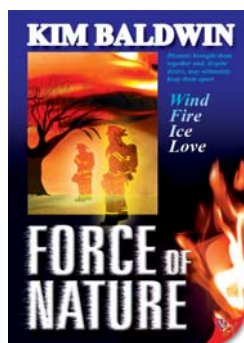
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Book Review: October 19, 2005

by Lynne Jamneck (reviewer at L-word.com Literature)



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**L-word.com
Literature**

Jacky
L-word.com *Publisher*

Force of Nature delivers in more ways than one. From the very start, Baldwin throws the reader straight into the action as volunteer firefighter Gable McCoy, still on her one-year probation period as a volunteer with the Plainfield Township Fire Department almost literally drives into the force of a tornado.

Gable happens upon Erin Richards, trapped in the basement of her home after taking a beating from the furious tornado. Gable stays with Erin, talking her through the dark of night until help from the outside arrives. This serves as an inventive way of introducing the two main characters, getting to know their backgrounds and creating that connection which will carry them through the rest of the story. When Erin later volunteers as a firefighter herself, Gable realizes that she is strongly attracted to Erin but fearing rejection and the possible demise of her friendship with Erin, Gable keeps her newfound feelings under wraps. Yet how long can she work side-by-side with Erin without being honest about the way she truly feels?

Force of Nature is filled with nonstop, fast paced action. Tornadoes, raging fire blazes, heroic and daring rescues... Baldwin does a fine job of describing the fast-paced scenes and inspiring the reader to keep on turning the pages. Also obvious is the writer's love of nature, and the fact that Kim Baldwin herself lives in a cabin surrounded by acres of forest and woods is patently obvious through her descriptive narrative. The dialogue is easy to read and flows well. It's also a plus when the reader gets to learn new facts about something they might not have known before—in this instance, firefighting.

Force of Nature is a romance, and at that a perfectly enjoyable one. As the tag line says—Wind. Fire. Ice. Love. It's got all of those elements, and more. Plus, of course, heroic women in firefighting uniforms...

-Lynne Jamneck, author of *Down the Rabbit Hole*

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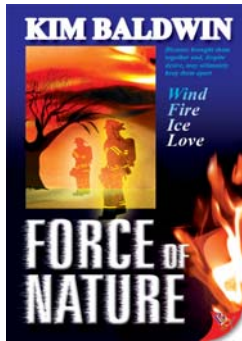
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Book Review: October 2005

by Lori L. Lake (reviewer at [MBR](#))



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Midwest Book Review

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James A. Cox
Editor-in-Chief

After wowing readers with last year's thriller, HUNTER'S PURSUIT, Kim Baldwin's follow-up is a romance. But it's a romance book-ended by scenes with thriller qualities, starting with a twister.

Forty-six year old Gable McCoy is employed at a pharmacy and works as a volunteer firefighter for Plainfield Township, Michigan. One evening, when her corner of the county is hit with bad weather culminating in tornados touching down, she sets out to help those in her assigned area. Little does she know that the storm will literally touch her life. "In a whirling hail of sticks and stones and leaves, she scrambled down the bank, her hands shielding her face. The wind tried to blow her off her feet, and the noise of the tornado was deafening, like a jet aircraft parked directly overhead. Squinting between her fingers, she saw the twister cut out of the woods and onto the highway a quarter of a mile away. It looked like a mammoth V-shaped plume of black smoke" (p. 15).

Though Gable's life is spared, the house of a nearby resident is destroyed. When Gable gets to the decimated ruins, she can't believe anyone could still be alive. But Erin Richards did survive and is trapped in the basement bathroom. Unfortunately, Gable can't get to her. But they can still talk through the wreckage, and that they do-most of the night. Sight unseen, the two women form quite an attachment, and their friendship begins from there.

Baldwin writes great action scenes throughout with just the right balance between plot tension and the character's internal thoughts. Her descriptions of the training, fire, and rescue efforts are terrific. The ups and downs of the two characters' relationship occur in a natural, yet not entirely predictable, progression. Just like a twister or a forest fires, you're never quite sure what direction Gable and Erin will go. Will they play it safe? Or give in to passion? Highly recommended to all who enjoy a good romance with rescue/action interspersed.

-Lori L. Lake, author of *Have Gun We'll Travel*

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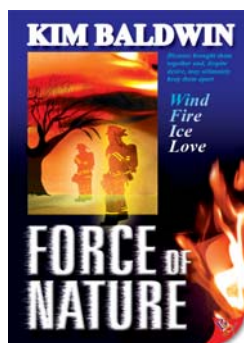
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Book Review: December 2005

by Cheri Rosenberg (reviewer at [MBR](#))



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James A. Cox

Editor-in-Chief

Kim Baldwin, Golden Crown Literary Society Award finalist for her outstanding action adventure debut novel, *Hunter's Pursuit*, has written a charming romance that will equally delight her fans. *Force of Nature*, set in rural Michigan where tornadoes and other natural disasters abound, packs an emotional wallop. Author Lori L. Lake writes, "There's something about it that's just Real – and vastly satisfying."

Gable McCoy is a pharmacist by profession and, because of her commitment to public service, is a volunteer firefighter for the Plainfield Township Fire Department. The forty-six year old embarks on a full-out mobilization of the county's search and rescue squad due to an impending tornado. After nearly succumbing to the disaster, Gable manages to avoid harm when she meets Erin Richards, a divorced, thirty-nine year old music teacher, trapped in the basement of her destroyed home. Baldwin's authentic dialogue and brilliant descriptions of the setting makes it easy to visualize being there – soaked, freezing, scared but brave – while intimately learning about the characters as they get to know each other during a long, dark, and stormy night.

The sign of a gifted writer, besides drawing her readers in with a fascinating tale, is being able to describe an event (catastrophic or otherwise) so vividly that the reader can feel it, taste it, hear it, smell it, and see it, even if she has never experienced these circumstances prior to reading the novel. "Adrenaline jolted her [Gable] from her inertia and she dove into the pipe, ignoring the stench of rotted matter and the cold slimy water that soaked her to the skin. It [the tornado] was upon her in an instant, trying to suck her from the pipe, tugging at her with fierce determination" [p. 15]. Kim Baldwin adeptly depicts the fictional world with sharpness to rival the real world, writing realistic action, emotion, and descriptions in every scene.

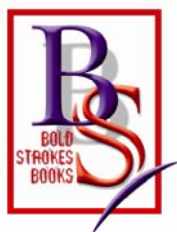
Baldwin is also adept at characterization and develops interesting character arcs explicitly. It's easy to get into the character's head to see exactly where they are coming from, what they are feeling, what makes them tick, and how life's events and their own maturation changes them. The inner turmoil is evident as Gable answers the call of duty, "She felt the full weight of that responsibility as a ferocious wind gust tried to wrestle the steering wheel from her hands. Butterflies crowded her stomach as she struggled to keep the Jeep on the road. *Lives might depend on you today.* She had to bury her fear and try to remain focused" [p. 14]. Notice how the internal dialogue easily mingles with descriptions of how the storm literally takes control of Gable's car, "a ferocious wind gust tried to wrestle the steering wheel from her hands," while it figuratively takes control of her emotions, "She felt the full weight of that responsibility," and how Gable summons up enough courage to do her job. The reader learns and cares more about the courageous woman behind the action as the story unfolds.

After the tornado, Gable is unable to locate Erin until the younger woman shows up at the firehouse as a new recruit. Falling in love with Erin, believing she is straight, Gable laments between secretly loving her and wanting to remain friends even if it could never be more than that. Another exquisite example of effective internal dialogue happens when Gable goes clothes shopping with her friend and endures Erin's undressing without being able to touch her because she can't risk disclosing her true feelings. "Her self-therapy included a pep talk. *You have to get over this. You're being ridiculous. She's the best prospect for a friend you've had in ages, and you're going to screw that up if you keep mooning over her like this. She's straight. Get over it already*" [p. 60].

Life threatening tornadoes and fires are not the only forces of nature to affect these two admirable women. Internal conflicts can also stand in the way of true happiness. Erin goes through a major transformation as she discovers things about herself she never thought about until she met Gable and works through the demons of her past.

Readers who take pleasure in courtship, appreciate characters who work through their angst, have a soft spot in their hearts for romance, and lust for adventure, will enjoy Kim Baldwin's five star novel, *Force of Nature*. Even if a person has never inhaled smoke from a fire, or lived through a natural disaster, Baldwin writes it in such a way that it's very easy to imagine exactly what it must be like.

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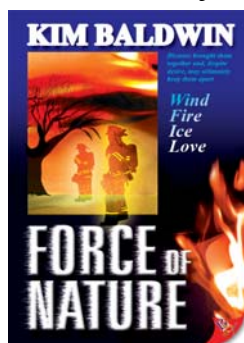
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Book Review: January 2006

by Arlene Germain (reviewer at MBR and February 2006 at JAW)



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James A. Cox

Editor-in-Chief

Kim Baldwin returns with her second novel, *Force of Nature*, which is distinctly different from her award-winning debut work, *Hunter's Pursuit*. The wonderfully entertaining *Pursuit* was primarily an action/thriller with the focal point being the one main character's skill in survival at any cost. *Force of Nature* is action-packed, has fast-paced thrilling rescue scenes, but here the author has chosen to focus her character development on the two main characters.

Gable McCoy is a forty-six year-old pharmacist who is also in her rookie year as a volunteer firefighter in a rural Michigan community. After having survived a tornado, she begins her task of search and rescue in the area. She comes upon the devastated home of Erin Richards, a thirty-nine year-old teacher who has recently moved to the area. Erin is alive but unfortunately trapped in her basement bathroom. Completely surrounded by debris, Gable must await other rescuers before extricating Erin and taking her to safety. Throughout the long night, Gable keeps Erin occupied with conversational anecdotes and mutual family histories. This is no easy task since Erin is both claustrophobic and has a fear of the dark. However, as the hours wear on, a friendship develops, which, unbeknownst to either woman, will face even greater challenges as their story progresses.

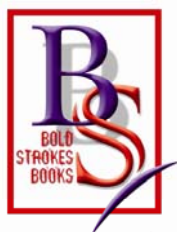
Baldwin has a natural gift for creating a scene and immediately immersing the reader. Compelled by the tumultuous tornadic winds, both Gable and the reader hit that three-foot wide drainpipe just in time to escape almost certain death. "It was upon her in an instant, trying to suck her from the pipe, tugging at her with fierce determination" (p. 15). The reader can feel the vacuum inside that pipe, can experience the hands sliding helplessly along the narrow algae-covered walls, and can feel the pelting stones and sticks as they assault the exposed legs. The reality of the situation is skillfully conveyed through the concise syntax and expert word choice.

Another hallmark of this novel is the manner in which Baldwin takes the mundane and prosaic events of everyday living and juxtaposes them with that thankfully rare catastrophic natural occurrence. These are ordinary women with jobs and lives; they are not superheroes in any way, and this very credible casting delivers much more of an impact for the reader. The suspension of disbelief is admirably achieved. It is also refreshing to read a novel where comely twenty-somethings are not cavorting across the chapters. Both Gable and Erin are attractive, professional, and responsible older women. That the author has chosen to write about this demographic is much appreciated by this reader.

Creating the uncertainty about Erin's sexual identity and developing the necessary sexual tension between these two main characters could very easily have lent itself to the tried and cliché coming-out experience. However, Baldwin surpasses this hurdle with wonderfully humorous exchanges of dialogue. She has a gift for creating resonant and realistic conversations among her various characters as well as a genuine sense of what genuinely coincides with any given situation. There are many conflicts presented throughout the course of the novel, but Baldwin offers clear and appealing resolutions for all.

Force of Nature is an exciting and substantial reading experience which will long remain with the reader. Likeable characters with plausible problems and concerns, imaginative settings, engrossing events, and a well-tailored writing style all contribute to an exceptional novel. Baldwin's characterization is acutely and meticulously circumscribed and expansive. It is indeed gratifying to see a new author attempt and succeed in expanding her literary technique and writing style. Kim Baldwin is an author who has achieved both in *Force of Nature*.

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