



Red Knife

William Kent Krueger

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The newest book in William Kent Krueger's award-winning Corcoran O'Connor series finds the charismatic private investigator caught in the middle of a racial gang war that's turning picturesque Tamarack County, Minnesota, into a bloody battlefield.

When the daughter of a powerful businessman dies as a result of her meth addiction, her father, strong-willed and brutal Buck Reinhardt, vows revenge. His target is the Red Boyz, a gang of Ojibwe youths accused of supplying the girl's fatal drug dose. When the head of the Red Boyz and his wife are murdered in a way that suggests execution, the Ojibwe gang mobilizes, and the citizens of Tamarack County brace themselves for war, white against red.

Both sides look to Cork O'Connor, a man of mixed heritage, to uncover the truth behind the murders. A former sheriff, Cork has lived, fought, and nearly died to keep the small-town streets and his family safe from harm. He knows that violence is never a virtue, but he believes that it's sometimes a necessary response to the evil that men do. Racing to find answers before the bloodshed spreads, Cork himself becomes involved in the darkest of deeds. As the unspeakable unfolds in the remote and beautiful place he calls home, Cork is forced to confront the horrific truth: Violence is a beast that cannot be contained.

In *Red Knife*, Krueger gives his readers a vivid picture of racial conflict in small-town America, as well as a sensitive look at the secrets we keep from even those closest to us and the destructive nature of all that is left unsaid between fathers and sons, husbands and wives, friends and lovers.

Red Knife Details

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Judy says

It's always good to connect with Cork O'Connor. William Krueger is such a good storyteller. I enjoy his writing and the characters he creates. This was another good mystery. The O'Connor family figures more in this book and the story line. It's especially interesting to see, Annie, the daughter grow and develop. I'm glad there are more of this series to enjoy.

Eadie says

The Cork O'Connor mysteries are always consistently very good. But, this one seems the best so far. There are lots of twists and the book was very hard to put down. The plot was well-structured and the story was told well. I highly recommend this series but they should be read in order as the stories build one upon the other.

Linda Branich says

I have read several of Krueger's Cork O'Connor series, and one other stand alone work, and this one surprised me. It is my least favorite; not bad, but not great.

This book took involves drugs, gangs, secrets, prejudice, and murder. Once again, Cork finds himself too Indian for the whites, and too white for the Indians, which is a perpetual problem for Cork. At one point, Cork finds himself in a position where he must choose between the two branches of his heritage.

I cannot exactly pinpoint why this particular book left me a bit cold. As I said, good, but not great.

Phrynne says

Another great episode in this excellent series. Cork involves himself again in police work, although this time he is encouraged by the Sheriff to do so, and he finds himself in conflict between his native Indian and his white cultures.

As in the last book there is a lot about Cork's family. This time it is Annie's turn to take centre stage and I enjoyed her story very much. Again Jo and Cork manage to rise above their disagreements and life is good. I was blown away by the ending. I had no idea at all that that was coming. It was shocking but amazing and left me thinking this has to be five stars. William Kent Krueger really knows how to write a good book.

Jonetta says

Racial tensions reach dangerous levels in Tamarack County when the daughter of a prominent (and volatile) businessman dies while under the influence of meth, supposedly provided to her by a member of Red Boyz, an Ojibwe gang. When the gang's leader, who has protected the man responsible for dealing the drug, is executed along with his wife. Cork O'Connor finds himself thrust in the middle of all sides (including law enforcement) as they look to him to take a side and bring some kind of resolution even though he's no longer the sheriff.

There are so many angles in this story I needed to keep cheat sheets to remember all the potential motives. Conflicts abound within and outside of the various groups, and I mean all of them. Cork's reactions were sometimes curious but mostly in character and putting his family first. His daughter Annie has an important role in this story with a poignant ending that almost brought me to tears.

To say this story has complicated edges is an understatement. Family ties, those biological, emotional and otherwise, is a strong and prominent theme throughout. The ending is pretty shocking, one I should have seen coming but didn't despite Henry Meloux's prescient warnings. I had a tough time putting this one down, finishing in a day. It was narrated by Buck Schirner who does well except for the female voices but I'm a David Chandler fan and missed him. Good story, though, when you dig beneath the surface.

Kathleen says

This is Krueger's 8th novel in the Cork O'Connor murder/mystery series. Here we have the death of teenager due to her meth addiction. Her father vows revenge upon the Red Boyz, a gang of Ojibwe youths accused of supplying the fatal drug dose. Next, the leader of the Red Boyz and his wife are murdered, and the body count just keeps rising. The theme of vengeance and vigilante justice will be disturbing to readers who believe in the rule of law. Pass.

William says

Giant cliché. Sadly, Krueger has become a clown.

Kris - My Novelesque Life says

RATING: 4 STARS

(Not Reviewed on Blog)

Listened to on audio

Racial and cultural tensions are at a high in this novel, especially with the violence that it brings. Cork - being mixed in both finds himself at odds with both sides. This novel was high action, suspense and emotions. I find myself really getting swept up with the characters' emotions.

Jim says

This is the eighth book in the series. If you look through the previous seven, you'll see three and four star ratings. This one almost got two stars. I found it less interesting than the others. It's based on vengeance/vigilante type thinking.

Having said that, the ending was different from the others, and appealing.

There is a secondary story that surfaces at the end, that I have mixed feelings as to its inclusion, but the way it is written (stylization) I found very interesting/compelling.

He added a time frame shift that he'd never done before. Also well written.

Then he adds a coda in the last chapter that is very poignant. As a father, anyway, the very last sentence of the book, expressed figuratively, was very effective.

Carl Brookins says

So readers know, Mr. Krueger and I are very well-acquainted. This is his eighth entry in a powerful award-winning series about Corcoran O'Connor, family man, ex-sheriff, sometime private investigator, and an upright and very moral man. O'Connor's life is complicated by his staunch roots in both Native American and Caucasian ethnicity. His life is also complicated by his two daughters, a son, and his feisty, bright and somewhat uptight wife, Jo. Their communication at times seems as obtuse as between strangers from different worlds. There are times in this story when this reader would like to reach out and kick O'Connor in his well-shaped backside.

Krueger has carefully shaped each episode in this long family saga to explore significant and troubling aspects of our modern society. Red Knife is no different. It begins with a significant and violent episode in the life of a young Ojibwa boy. The story then commences to explore in some detail the influences of violence in our society. The genius of this storyteller, aside from his consummate storytelling skills is that he is careful to avoid sweeping polemical statements. The novel examines some of the causes of violence in intimate and personal ways. Then it goes beyond the acts themselves, almost always leaving to reader to sort out her or his own reactions to the violence. Red Knife commences to also explore how violence can affect individuals not directly engaged in the violence itself; family members, friends and even enemies, members of the law enforcement community, and those on the periphery. And always there is that layer of intimate struggle for understanding and connection between Jo and Cork O'Connor.

I don't wish to suggest this is a heavily violent novel. It is not. It is, rather, a smoothly written, carefully plotted and laid out examination of an intimate group of individuals, some of whom are family members, some not, and their responses to the violence they experience and observe. Krueger has produced a thoughtful, richly textured human novel, one that most readers, I suspect, will remember and think about long after they close the book.

Pat says

Kent Krueger's work has always had a friendly, down home quality to it. Cork O'Connor is decent, do-the-right-thing-even-when-no one-is-watching values. In Red Knife he no longer sheriff but is called on to head off a brewing civil war within the Ojibwe tribe.

As always, Krueger's descriptions of Cork's family life, his devotion to finding peaceful answers to violent questions, his internal toughness are fascinating as they depict a man who is examining himself as he investigates others. Krueger also takes secondary characters and brings them to life, giving them a vibrancy that makes them human, flawed and sympathetic.

The plot of Red Knife keeps you guessing throughout the book until the end. The story evolves in places you don't expect. With a very touching ending.

Steve says

People who like Tony Hillerman particularly for the setting in Navajo country may enjoy Krueger's Cork O'Connor mysteries. The book is set in Northern Minnesota. The Ojibwe play a role in each of these mysteries that I have read. I thought I had the various killings figured out early on, but was fooled repeatedly. The ending to one of the stories that runs through the book is tragic. I prefer more "happy ever after" or "riding into the sunset" to something as realistic and grim as the ending. I would recommend this book if you are looking for a good mystery that will keep you interested until the end.

Ronna says

"The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."
(Numbers 14:18)

In Krueger's 8th Cork O'Connor novel, many issues cause much violence a small town in Minnesota. Conflicts between the Ojibwe Indians and the white population bring Cork into the conflict even though he is no longer sheriff. Though Cork has promised his family to stay out of these situations, someone shooting at him and his 7 year old son, brings him into the middle of everything. Different groups amongst the Ojibwe are in conflict, the whites and Ojibwe don't always trust each other, drugs cause death and violence, revenge causes quick deadly violence, and bullying and neglect causes unspeakable tragedy. Can violence really stop further violence?

I continue to find these Cork O'Connor novels more than just entertaining. They are atmospheric, with flawed but honest characters, that also deal with difficult moral and ethical community and personal issues. Love it when a book is good reading, but also makes me think! I listened to this on Audible and really enjoyed the narrator.

Erik says

I am not going to go into a plot synopsis, you can read plenty of those elsewhere. One of my least favorite of the series so far. I thought the show-down with the Latin Lords was a bit on the ridiculous side, and I also felt that Cork would never make the decision to stand with "The People" when they were deciding to do what they did. There were a lot of little sub-plots in this book and I thought that was how Kruger hid the truth rather than a good standalone mystery. Hopefully that makes sense.

Jane Brant says

I did not like this book as well as I did "Iron Lake" because of the makeshift gang motif and staged Columbine type ending. The plot fell flat in places. You can read a lot of the other reviews and basically find out what worked and what didn't. But I will still continue reading his books....but won't recommend this one to friends as a place to begin tasting this author's work.

Brenda says

There is a lot happening in this book, much of it dire and depressing. I understand the vigilantism of the Ojibwa and Whites in the story perhaps because I live in an area with that tension. The ending surprised me. There are changes coming. Although some of the future has been revealed, there is a feeling of dread in my heart.

J.K. Grice says

This was my first William Kent Krueger novel, and it won't be my last. Mystery series are a dime a dozen, but Krueger is a way above average writer, in any genre. He does a superb job of drawing the reader into each one of Cork O'Connor's cases. For me personally, I love the northern Minnesota outdoor locations, as well as the Native American and natural environment connections. You couldn't ask for a more solid mystery series.

S.D. says

Cork O'Connor is no longer a cop but still gets involved in cases. Since he is part Ojibwe he is able to ease the friction between the races. This time it explodes when a teenager dies from a drug overdose and her father blames the gang from the Ojibwe Reservation. I especially like Henry Meloux, an elderly member of the Grand Medicine Society, who spews words of wisdom which need an interpreter to decipher. This time he sees a darkness. And the prediction comes true in an explosive ending that I never saw coming. Kent Krueger has a great sense of place and is one of the most under-appreciated authors today. It's a toss up as to whether Red Knife or I Shall Not Want (Julia Spencer-Fleming) is my best read of the year.

Jeremy Lattimore says

I thought part of this book was OK. The Latin Lords stuff felt like a stretch as an outcome. The very contrived massacre to make what I felt was a political statement didn't tie in to the rest of the book. I really disliked that being strapped on. All in all not a great book and definitely the worst of the series so far.

Angela says

Unputdownable addition to the series. Each time I think I have a favourite book in this series, the next book blows me away. Another five star read.

What lengths will a person go to in order to do what they believe is right? This is a question Cork O'Connor faces over the course of the book.

If you aren't reading the Cork O'Connor series, it's well worth making the time to try the first book in the series Iron Lake.
