



## Boundary Waters

*William Kent Krueger*

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## **Boundary Waters** William Kent Krueger

The Quetico-Superior Wilderness: more than two million acres of forest, white-water rapids, and uncharted islands on the Canadian/American border. Somewhere in the heart of this unforgiving territory, a young woman named Shiloh -- a country-western singer at the height of her fame -- has disappeared. Her father arrives in Aurora, Minnesota, to hire Cork O'Connor to find his daughter, and Cork joins a search party that includes an ex-con, two FBI agents, and a ten-year-old boy. Others are on her trail as well -- men hired not just to find her, but to kill her.

As the expedition ventures deeper into the wilderness, strangers descend on Aurora, threatening to spill blood on the town's snowy streets. Meanwhile, out on the Boundary Waters, winter falls hard. Cork's team of searchers loses contact with civilization, and like the brutal winds of a Minnesota blizzard, death -- violent and sudden -- stalks them.

## **Boundary Waters Details**

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Author : William Kent Krueger

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## From Reader Review Boundary Waters for online ebook

### Maureen DeLuca says

Another good read from this series??

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### Trilby says

Another book by Krueger set in Aurora, Minnesota. There is a real Aurora in the state, but the fictional Aurora is in a fictional county near a fictional Indian rez. This is another adventure of Cork O'Connor, an erstwhile sheriff with an attorney wife. As someone said about Inspector Morse and Oxford, the murder rate went through the roof in Aurora after Cork went into law enforcement. What a corker.

Like most mysteries, the plot is fairly absurd, and the good guys often do really stupid things to get themselves into major pickles. One of the characters, a gay hayseed C&W star named Arkansas Willie, is particularly ridiculous. At least he provides a convenient foil for Cork. Another character has a particularly ridiculous name, Marais Grand--for dumb, as they say in Minnesota.

At one point, when a character is hit by rifle fire, he plunges violently backwards, as one sees in the movies. Ha ha, that wouldn't happen. As an episode of "Mythbusters" proves, victims of gunfire simply drop where they stand or sit. In addition, metaphorical wolves keep popping up at convenient times as Chippewa totem animals. At least we never see their point of view, as readers do in the Swedish mystery I reviewed recently. Maybe Swedish wolves are more cerebral. Who knows?

Despite these divergences from reality, however, the depiction of backwoods survival lore is accurate. The real star of the novel is the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, the setting for most of the action. Even though the places in the BWCA have fictional names, Krueger vividly describes the coming of fall to the hills, rivers, forests, and lakes that stretch far north into Canada. "The bitter cold can be felt emanating from the pages," says a blurb from "Midwest Book Review" on the cover. Wimp. This reviewer should go to the BWCA in January, when the lakes and rivers are frozen solid, the land is blanketed in deep snow, and the temperature plunges to -35F. The novel's action takes place in mid-October, when the leaves have turned, but the frost hasn't set in. It's a spooky time of year, perfect for a homicidal maniac to be stalking characters.

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### Joe says

#2 and counting and JUST as good as #1, IRON LAKE! I am so thrilled to have found this author and his series with Cork O'Connor. Mr Krueger's writing style finds me, stopping and re-reading passages. His way with words often just takes my breath away! Talk about making you THINK and WISH you could write like this! Amazing! Then I just imagine this scenery, best I can. I mean, his descriptions of the Boundary waters, the 2 million acres of forest, white-water rapids and uncharted islands on the Canadian-American border will honestly leave you wanting to run to an atlas to locate this area or go on-line to actually see this type of wilderness, maybe even add this to your travel adventures. Then you get to add all this to the story line, the drama and excitement of the travels thru this land, by foot and canoe. The characters come to life for me, the Indian lore is fascinating and I, for one, am totally clueless as to "Who Done It", until the very end. I LOVE

when that happens. Bottom line, I love these stories and Henry Meloux, there is No One like him! Just reading about him, somehow gives me a sense of "peace". That is how "real" these books are. Enjoy!

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### Emma says

4.5 stars. What a great series! Cork O'Connor and his family and friends of the Reservation community to which he belongs are well drawn characters, the setting is evocative and the bodies are dropping like flies. Didn't guess who was behind it all either. Something about Krueger's writing really appeals to me and this story carried me along effortlessly. Series recommended.

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### William says

**Last December 2017, TRUMP secretly REVERSED OBAMA PROTECTION FOR BOUNDARY WATERS, on behalf the owners of a Chilean copper and nickel mining company who happen to be the landlords for his criminal daughter and her husband-henchman Kushner.**

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**The middle half of this book is superb, 5-stars or more.** The start is slow and a bit pedestrian but not bad, and the final quarter seems rushed and clunky, as if the author got bored with it and wanted to hurry up and finish. Too bad. A bit more work and this would have been a full 5.5 stars!

Ignoring the clumsy and carelessly contrived sections, the middle half of the book is very much "man against the wilderness" wrapped in a pretty good mystery. The scenery and weather are superb, the characters are alive and interesting, the native American spirits and stories are marvellous.

I really am enjoying Cork more, he's recovered his mojo, and we see that his wife, Jo, sees that in him too. I just hope this promising thread is not just to manipulate the reader with later conflict and disappointment. (I never felt any of that in Harry Bosch's difficult marriage to the beautiful but tragic Eleanor Wish)

Krueger invests far more into Jo than in the previous book. She's not just a plot device here, and is becoming a more full-fledged and interesting character, not just a caricature.

This book would stand "head and shoulders" above the very good first book, if not for the careless sections. I also had great difficulty with the motives of the main villain, and the solution to the long-ago murder of Marias. Those seemed contrived, with confused motives, not "real living people", sadly.

The book is full of wonderful prose; I really love "the philosopher-detective" best in noir. It's in the still moments when they are alone, usually at night, when the deep speaks to them... that voice inside us that knows the truth of the world, of who we are.

The epilogue is very nice, very spiritual.

Some notes and quotes:

*Shiloh followed a steep trail upward through the pines and boulders to the top of the ridge. The air was crisp and clear. Her hands were already chilled, so she slipped her gloves on and began to climb. The woods were quiet. The sound of her own heavy breathing and the clomp of her booted feet seemed an intrusion. For some reason, the scent of the evergreen was sharper to her than ever, and she wondered if in preparing to leave it all behind, she'd become suddenly aware of how pervasive and wonderful it was.*

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*The door closed. The big Lincoln pulled away. Cork started running again, back toward Sam's Place. He'd told Meloux things became clearer to him when he ran. But the way the situation stood now, he could run all the way to the f...ing moon and everything would still be a mess.*

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*The dark shape of Arkansas Willie Raye bent forward as the man hugged his knees. Cork understood how it felt to be separated from what you loved, from what had helped define who and what you were. It was the worst kind of loneliness.*

5.0% Starts very well. I'm pleased to see that Cork's relationship with Jenny is strong, and that he is happier than he was in "Iron Lake"

17.0% ... it's in the still moments when they are alone, usually at night, when the deep speaks to them. That voice inside us that knows the truth of the world, of who we are.

43.0% ... this is extremely good. The pacing is wonderful, the rhythm perfect, the plot complex and dark and real. I'm impressed.

74.0% ... clumsy, clichéd confrontation at this point. Perhaps Krueger got bored with this part of the mystery?

91.0% .... I'm quite unhappy with some of the motives and behaviour of some of the supporting characters. Seems lazy on the part of Krueger

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## Marita says

*““You ever been in the Boundary Waters?”*

*"Never."*

*"It runs all the way to the border. Continues on the other side, but the Canadians call it the Quetico there. More than two million acres of tall trees, blue lakes, and fast rivers.””*

And out there, somewhere, is Shiloh. Now why would a beautiful and famous young country & western singer be hiding out in the middle of nowhere? Her father, apparently concerned for her safety, enlists the help of Cork O'Connor to find her. But, Arkansas Willie isn't the only person looking for her. (view spoiler) Some FBI agents are very insistent that Cork help them find Shiloh. Some gangsters and contract killers are

also after her. Who are all these people? Are they who they say they are? Why are they all looking for her? What is the connection to her mother's murder some years previously when Shiloh was a little girl? What has happened to Wendell Two Knives who had been assisting Shiloh, bringing her to safety, providing food and delivering letters? Perhaps the 10-year old Louis Two Knives can help, and so he gets roped in to the search for Shiloh.

Shiloh, realising that she is going to have to fend for herself, packs up the basics and sets off in a canoe. What are her chances? Not only is she short of food, and miles from anywhere; not only are various people out looking for her, but there are also bears, wolves and the elements to deal with. What are her chances of survival? Will she be found, and if so, who will find her first? Soon *"Dead men were being hauled out of the Boundary Waters like cut wood."* Who will survive, and who won't?

William Kent Krueger has written a tale full of twists and turns. The setting is magnificent. However, (view spoiler) All in all an enjoyable read, and I suspect that I'll be dipping into this series\* from time to time.

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\*This is the second book in the Cork O'Connor series, the first being Iron Lake.

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## Christine says

I am in love with this author. Boundary Waters is #2 in the Cork O'Connor series of 14 books. I do not plan to finish many series over 6 books, as there are so many authors out there I want to explore. I do however plan to read everything W. Kent Krueger writes. I gave this book 5 stars because of the way the writing made me FEEL. For reasons difficult for me to describe, I felt at peace. I also felt home, I felt alive, I felt I was in the story with the characters.

Mr. Krueger's masterful though simple descriptions of the Boundary Waters (a series of lakes, rapids, islands, and forestry along the northern Minnesota-Canadian border) were mesmerizing. I generally don't like much description interfering with the pace of my thrillers, but Krueger knows exactly how to infuse atmosphere with minimal wording and no frills. He pulls you into the setting. The reader can smell the pines, feel the damp chilly air, hear the sounds of the lakes. He also imbues his novels with Indian folklore. At first I did not think I would enjoy this aspect of his writing, but I actually found it fascinating and to be a significant recurring "character," so to speak, in the stories.

Character development is a very strong point of this author. His protagonist, Cork O'Connor, former sheriff of Aurora, Minnesota, is strong, but not infallible, and immensely likeable. There is continued development of Cork, his family, and certain other characters from one book to the next, so it is best to read the series in order.

The mystery in this book was solid and I was fooled by the ending, always a good thing. But again, it was the whole AURA of the book, more than anything, that drew me in. I strongly recommend this series to all mystery lovers. I cannot wait to move on to Purgatory Ridge, book #3 from this consummate author.

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## Harry says

William Kent Krueger's Cork O'Connor series comprise a series of stories set in Aurora Minnesota, an area of the country of which I'm blatantly ignorant. Frankly, in reading the reviews of this setting I managed to barely stifle a yawn. Small town mysteries set in a frozen wasteland? With boring backgrounds that involve Indian supernatural folklore - I don't stomach mysteries that resort to such subterfuge, avoid beyond this world explanations when the genre is detective/mystery, decry irrational explanations of the crime which to me defeat the whole purpose of reading the damn book (unless of course you are Michael Gruber and you're reading the Jimmy Paz series - yeah, I'll read anything Gruber puts out there!) - boring red neck characters (is there such a thing as a Minnesota red neck?), small town corruption and politics, incompetent forensics and pathologists, petty motivations, and what not. Needless to say, I wasn't thrilled.

And yet: In 2005 and 2006, Krueger won back to back Anthony Awards for best novel - a feat only matched by one other writer since the award's inception. Normally, as this essay so eloquently states, I don't ascribe to popularity, or the NYT Best Sellers list as those manuscripts inevitably disappoint but where it comes to mystery/detective awards, the final vote is usually something I can go for. And, as I was in a hurry and needed something to download to my Kindle, fully prepared to read yet another book full of flat characters, resigned myself to boring ethnographic descriptions, I said: "Screw it, let's give Mr. Krueger a try."

I found myself marveling at this author's delicate handling and knowledge of the very thing that made me not want to read it: The spiritual undertones and affectations that guide human beings (which I am interested in) but that can come loose at the seams when bordering on superstition and surreal explorations. That he does this through the juxtaposition of Catholicism and the folklore and beliefs of the Anishinaabeg, or "Original People", and that he does so by fusing that carefully within the storyline so that it never seems gratuitous, over played, or cause the outcome to be dependent on irrationality is masterful. Nice! As Mr. Krueger says:

*"In the mysteries that I write, I often deal with the whole question of the spiritual journey. It's always intrigued me. I've never believed in the Christian view of heaven. But I certainly believe in eternal life. It's a belief that goes back to a black and white film I saw in a grungy movie theater when I was too young for all the esoteric considerations of the afterlife. It's amazing, isn't it, the things that can change your life."*

In terms of the Anishinaabeg Mr. Krueger is careful to not enforce the stereotype to which most have come to:

*[...]If you read my stories, please don't read them as ethnography. The Anishinaabeg are far more complex culturally, rich historically, and textured spiritually, than I will ever be able to adequately portray in my writing. But if I'm able to give you a sense of the admiration I feel for them, then I've succeeded.*

This book reminds me of my boyhood heroes. In the Netherlands where I was born, it wasn't cops and robbers we played while kids: it was cowboy and indians; my fictional heroes were *Winnetou and Old Shatterhand* a YA series published in the Netherlands but not available in the states. Krueger manages to convey the Native American culture spanning centuries, on into modern day America, in such a way so as to recall my boyhood dreams. There are terrifying moments, men bound to trees and being tortured, honor among killers, and dishonor and deceit within ordinary people.

As to Cork O'Connor the hero in this series. As most who read my reviews know, I thoroughly enjoy the loner as heroic, a man or woman who understands that despite social conventions (often designed to hide facing this) man is essentially alone, a creature running around on this planet with (hopefully) purpose. And, as most also know, I despise flat characters (Vince Flynn comes to mind - sorry, Leon!). Cork is the former, not the latter. As a father I understand the inexplicable guilt one feels towards one's children upon facing divorce. And as a father I have come to admire, as Cork does, the resiliency children have to overcome such a situation and make the best of it (far better managed than us adults!). Everything is about juxtaposition. Cork O'Connor is a man who believes in justice, not as meted out by often corrupt law enforcement, but the justice of not denying reality, the justice of truth. When Cork sets his mind to resolving a mystery that to

others seems clear cut, ready to be put to rest, he is like a rabid dog unwilling to lessen the vice like grip of his jaws no matter what the consequences to himself and those he loves. We feel his struggle with morality, his disappointment with an almighty being, and yet feel his empirical longing for a peace that the world has consigned to other worldly systems. Cork is, forever, the man in between.

The plot is superb. The writing carefully edited so as to give us a straight mystery detective while infusing us with a pleasurable knowledge of Aurora, it's inhabitants, and the evil that belies even the most tranquil of locations.

Yeah, I liked it! And, the usual disclaimer, if you've read this review of one of the O'Connor series, you've read 'em all. Good reading!

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## **Suzy says**

### **2 1/2 stars**

I did not enjoy this nearly as much as the first in the series Iron Lake. The mystery at the heart of this was not compelling and the writing not up to the standard of the first book. A young woman (famous) country singer wanted to connect with her Ojibway roots, but it did not ring as authentic to me. And the chase through the boundary waters to find her and save her from violence was hard to follow. I'm going to put this all down to sophomore slump. I will say, though, that the ending left a good taste in my mouth. Krueger wrapped up this book with a young Ojibway, who had an important role in the hunt for the killer, telling a poignant story memorializing a tribal elder who fell in the pursuit of the bad guys. Left me with a few tears in my eyes.

Since many friends really like the series and it takes place in Minnesota, I'm at least going to give book three, Purgatory Ridge, a try.

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## **Veronica says**

Cork O'Connor, former Sheriff of Tamarack County, is about a year out of the events of book one in this series. Though separated from his wife, Jo, he's nevertheless making progress on some personal commitments. When a famous music mogul with ties to Cork's past shows up asking for help in finding his daughter, Cork is honor bound to oblige.

This was an excellent follow up to the author's debut novel in this series. No sophomore slump here. The author definitely has a way with words, using them equally well to describe the raw beauty of a winter wilderness, the terror of a young woman, and the peace and wisdom of Native American lore. It was well paced, switching back and forth between Cork's trials in the wilds of the Minnesota/Canadian border and Jo's efforts to piece the mystery together in town - but in a way that propelled the story forward at an even clip rather than the sometimes start/stop effects this type of POV swapping can cause. I'm looking forward to seeing what else Cork, Jo, and the rest of Aurora, MN have to offer.

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## **Pat says**

I'm very behind in posting my reviews but I've powered through some really interesting and different books in the last few weeks. Reviews coming.

This book was a bit darker than the first in the series methinks. Shiloh, a young female country and western singer has apparently gone missing in the wilderness near the town of Aurora. Cork O'Connor, a former sheriff there, gets involved in the search for her. It soon becomes apparent that all is not as it seems. There appears to be three separate groups of people seeking Shiloh and not all of them have her best interests at heart. Stuck in the wilderness with damaged canoes, Cork and his group must tackle the elements and evade ruthless killers to find the missing young woman. But how do they know who to trust?

The author has a rare talent for bringing a location to life and imbuing it with great beauty or a dark sense of malice as the occasion demands.

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### **Jim says**

This was another good addition to the series, an interesting murder mystery set in a lake area of Minnesota. The camping & other things that I knew anything about all seemed pretty well done. The mystery itself was very well done this time. Plenty of twists & turns along the way. Again, quite a bit of Indian lore & stories. They were interesting, for the most part.

One of the things I really liked about these books is the subtle streak of Indian mysticism. It's available if you want to believe in it or not. It could just be coincidence or have another explanation, but it pushes the bounds of normality. I find it intriguing without being overbearing.

There were a couple of things that bugged me. I really don't like being told the model of a gun if it doesn't make any difference. We're told in one place that someone has a .22 pistol - that's fine. Immediately after, we're told another has a Sig Sauer. Whoopee. Just a caliber & whether it is a revolver or an automatic does me fine, though.

Krueger often breaks common tasks up into steps, as if he's writing a manual. I don't really need or want that level of detail most of the time. Sometimes, when the task isn't common or the situation is tense, it works very well, though.

All in all, it was a very enjoyable listen. The reader's voice fit the story well. I wish my library had the 3d book in audio, but it only has the 4th.

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### **Susu says**

Not as good as the first in the series, but I want to read them in order for the over- arching story. I figured out the culprit early on. I will continue the series. I like the characters and the setting, but I'll take a break for now.

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### **Phrynne says**

Number two in a series which I think I am going to enjoy very much!!! At least, the first two books predict

good things to come.

I believe I remarked in my review of Iron Lake that the body count was amazingly high. I think this book may have it beaten. Bodies fall by the wayside throughout the story and I am not even sure that they are all collected by the end. At least a lot of them are baddies.

Krueger writes extremely well both in describing the amazing countryside and in his sympathetic approach to the native Indians. He also develops his characters and their relationships in a quiet, realistic way. I was happy with the way Jo and Cork started to sort their problems out. I also enjoy the slightly mystical moments, driven by the Indian legends.

A very enjoyable read and I am looking forward to number 3.

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### **Angela says**

Fast paced. All events occurred within a few days and it could really feel the sense of the chase as Cork and companions tried to locate a missing woman. Once again, Krueger creates a sense of atmosphere and setting within his book, that you can feel the end of Autumn and the onset of Winter. An absorbing contemporary mystery series.

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### **Kristin says**

This is the third book I've gotten on audio tape in this series. I read them a bit out of order – Purgatory Ridge (#3), then Iron Lake (#1) and Boundary Waters (#2). I'm actually glad I did, because if I had gotten to Boundary Waters without knowing something of what was coming, I would have stopped "reading".

The audio pronunciations aside (not the authors fault but still distracting), there were small things that were just not quite right. Here we have a chase happening in the BWCAW (Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness) – everyone is carrying a firearm, nobody checked in with the FS, we probably have an illegal cabin, and then we have helicopters and planes flying overhead toward the end. I don't mind fiction set in real places, but I DO mind when too many liberties are taken with the setting to make it fit the story.

My next complaint lies with the Italian "gangsters" followed by Vegas sheisters descending upon Aurora - one man each claiming to be the father of the missing Shilo. It was like no one thought to get a paternity test yet everyone was convinced they were the father, except her adopted father who knew he wasn't.

There were other issues – the whole spirit wolf and bear following the characters. The obvious clues being dropped to the reader but the characters couldn't for the life of them, figure it out. Half the people paddling these canoe's solo – unless you've got the right kind of canoe and the experience, then it's not as easy as it sounds. Nobody thinking to do a police check on all these people making demands until after the fact or after it was too late.

So why did I keep reading? Because I know that Purgatory Ridge was much, much better, and after a while, even despite the inconsistencies and errors, one develops an almost vested interest in the main character and you find yourself hanging on grimly till the conclusion rolls around with something akin to relief. So, on one hand I want to say Not Recommended – just start with book three; But if you like Cork's character and can tolerate some regional issues, then Reluctantly Recommended.

I need to read some science fiction now....

## Jonetta says

Cork O'Connor is contacted by Willie Raye to help find his daughter, Shiloh, who's disappeared. She's a famous Country & Western singer who apparently has chosen to remove herself into the Quetico-Superior Wilderness for some self reflection. The Feds have also inserted themselves into the search because they believe she now remembers information about her mother's murder 13-years ago. Unfortunately, there are other dark forces at play as others are out to find and kill her.

As with the first story, the setting is an important element of the story and Indian lore is featured prominently in every aspect of the plot. The complexity of the boundary waters (between the Minnesota and Canadian borders) added to the mystery and sense of isolation. There was a mystical quality threaded throughout even in the midst of sinister characters who were quite chilling. I liked how the points of view of the searches and those waiting back in Aurora were juxtaposed as it heightened the tension with subtle clues all over the place. I guessed the right villain because of them but had to constantly test my theory.

This was a lush story, burdened somewhat by the body count, but enriched by the storytelling of one of the characters, a young Native American boy who shared what was passed to him by his uncle. It was a perfect illustration of the rich culture that was key to finding Shiloh and made this story special. I opted to switch to the audio format for this series because I believed a good narration performance would increase my enjoyment and boy did it. Highly recommend not only this book but this format. This series is living up to my expectations.

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## Una Tiers says

Boundary Waters was more melancholy than some of Krueger's other books. His descriptions of the landscape and the traditions are awe inspiring and respectful.

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## Monnie says

There are so many books on my to-read list that I try - really - to mix things up; when I find a new-to-me series I love, I force myself not to run through every single one with nothing else in between. With this series, which I discovered quite recently, I stuck to that pattern and followed up the first book with something different. But an hour after that, I couldn't stand it; out came the next from this author's series featuring former backwoods Minnesota sheriff Cork O'Connor.

This time, a famous country-western singer named Shiloh - originally from Cork's neck of the woods in the Quetico-Superior Wilderness near the Canadian border - has gone missing. She left years ago to find fame and fortune and never returned, but her father, believing she may have come back, hires Cork to find her. Others, however, are intent on finding her as well, so a search party is formed that includes the father (who manages his daughter's successful recording company), a couple of FBI agents and a 10-year-old boy and his father from the local Anishinaabe tribe.

Back in the small town of Aurora, Cork's mostly estranged wife, Jo - a lawyer who specializes in Indian affairs, gets involved by working with the local sheriff to ferret out information on their end. As issues that

change the direction of their investigation turn up, the search team's body count starts to climb as they follow the path they believe Shiloh took through the wilderness. Clearly, someone wants her dead - but now the search team has lost contact with civilization and are themselves being stalked. Who will be the next victim - perhaps Cork? And can whoever is left find Shiloh before the killer does?

There's plenty of action, starting at the beginning and finishing at the end, and it's interspersed with interesting (to me, anyway), Indian stories and legends. Yes, folks, this book is another winner that makes me more eager than ever to see this series through to the end.

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## **Ron says**

My second dip into Krueger's Cork O'Conner series proved to be every bit as good as the first, if not a little better due to added intensity. Whereas Iron Lake set the tone as an intro, including a local murder mystery, Boundary Waters expands both the cast and the setting by going north of the Aurora community into the surrounding wilderness (as if Iron Lake isn't wild enough) where canoes are an absolute necessity. I'm getting to know Cork and the main characters a little better, to which I must add: is a good thing. There's a touch more suspense this time around as the mystery turns into a chase. Well done and pretty smart. And Krueger does not forget to include his constant other character: the Indian heritage and folklore. I'm glad for that. It's become a must for the added depth it brings.

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