My Personal Review:
In his novel, Krueger pays particular attention to the special bond between fathers and daughters, the anguished language of loss, the intricacies of human behavior and the personal flaws that hinder our spiritual growth. All of these issues come into play with the unexpected disappearance of Charlotte Kane, daughter of the wealthy Fletcher Kane in the small town of Aurora, Minnesota. Searching through a winter blizzard, it isn’t until the spring thaw that Charlotte’s body is recovered. With that discovery comes a slew of accusations, most directed at Solemn Winter Moon, a young Ojibwe Indian known for his eye for the ladies and, of late, for trouble. Retired ex-sheriff Cork O’Connor helps with the search, but later, when a new sheriff takes over, Cork is given the cold shoulder when making inquiries as to the disposition of the case.

For some reason, Sheriff Soderberg is purposefully rude to Cork, hostile even, a fact that dismays and frustrates a man who is only trying to help out interested parties, especially Solemn’s mother, who is concerned about her son taking the brunt of Charlotte Kane’s family vendetta, if and when an autopsy determines the cause of death. Solemn makes an easy target, an efficient way to put Charlotte’s murder or suicide behind the town. Cork’s wife, Jo, an attorney, takes on Solemn’s case and discovers a few well-hidden secrets that point to the motives of other law-abiding citizens. Due to new evidence, Solemn is released and a number of clandestine relationships are revealed, casting the formerly staid community into supposition overdrive, especially when Solemn Winter Moon experiences a spiritual awakening and is credited with inexplicable miracles.

As a very convoluted plot unwinds, there is much consideration of faith, the perception of good vs. evil. One questioning soul after another confronts his belief in miracles, one man in particular acting out disturbing compulsions against nature’s stark background, where everything seems clearer, removed from the conventional ambiguities of city life. The assumptions Cork makes lead him from one person to another, slowly
picking through the strange motives of a tortured mind. What began as a young woman’s disappearance becomes a trail of serial murders inspired by religious fanaticism, crimes committed in the name of God, the denouement of the guilty party illuminated by spiritual, if misdirected, intentions. Joining the mystery genre with Corks quest for renewed spirituality overrides the logical plot of the novel, faith tested as well as reason, the physical mystery piggybacked with a more personal endeavor, the protagonists return to a faith he had abandoned. Luan Gaines/2005.

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