Copper River: A Cork O'Connor Mystery (Cork O'Connor Mysteries) by William Kent Krueger

Enthralling Conclusion To Mercy Falls

Two-time Anthony Award-winning author William Kent Krueger has moved to the head of the crime fiction class (Chicago Sun-Times) with his gripping series featuring Sheriff Cork O'Connor. In Copper River, Cork is running for his life -- and straight into a murderous conspiracy involving teenage runaways. Desperately avoiding the clutches of professional hit men who have already put a bullet in his leg, Cork finds sanctuary outside the small Michigan town of Bodine. But while he's hiding out in an old resort owned by his cousin Jewell DuBois, a bitter widow with a fourteen-year-old son named Ren, the body of a young girl surfaces along the banks of the Copper River -- and then another teenager vanishes. Instead of thwarting his assassins, Cork focuses on tracking a ring of killers who prey on innocent children -- before anyone else falls victim. But as his deadly followers close in, Cork realizes he's made an error any good man might make -- and it may be his last.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I report that Kent is a fellow member of the Minnesota Crime Wave, as well as the critique group I belong to, and we are friends. Having said that, let me assure you that this is a dynamite book. Another in the fine Cork O'Connor series. Those who have read Mercy Falls will naturally want this book since it completes the arc that begins with the previous book. Nevertheless, Copper River is complete within its own covers.

But there is considerably more here than resolution to the turmoil conjured up in Mercy Falls. O'Connor, wounded by a professional killer, goes to ground in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan with distant relatives in an uncomfortable situation. Family relationships are always an important part of Krueger's novels. This book also explores some horrific circumstances that effectively demonstrate that our often common view of bucolic small-town life is sometimes at serious odds with reality.
O'Connor, fearing for his family, has taken refuge with the widow of a man he once arrested. While he heals he is drawn inexorably into the life of his nephew and the boys interesting teen aged companions. That life finally leads to the uncovering of crimes first revealed in one of the most moving open scenes I have ever read in a novel in this or any genre.

Krueger is a fine writer and he knows how to build suspense while telling a good story. But his real strength is in the characters he develops and their interactions. But dont just take the word of this reviewer. Pick up a copy and read the first page. Just the first page. Not the cover copy, or that on the flaps. Just page one. Then decide.

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