

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin white lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from dark purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming larger, more interconnected clusters than others.

This Tender Land

Written by William Kent Krueger

Published by griefconvention

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This Tender Land

This Tender Land

By William Kent Krueger

This Tender Land By William Kent Krueger

For fans of *Before We Were Yours* and *Where the Crawdads Sing*, a magnificent novel about four orphans on a life-changing odyssey during the Great Depression, from the New York Times bestselling author of *Ordinary Grace*.

This Tender Land Goodreads

1932, Minnesota—the Lincoln School is a pitiless place where hundreds of Native American children, forcibly separated from their parents, are sent to be educated. It is also home to an orphan named Odie O’Banion, a lively boy whose exploits earn him the superintendent’s wrath. Forced to flee, he and his brother Albert, their best friend Mose, and a brokenhearted little girl named Emmy steal away in a canoe, heading for the mighty Mississippi and a place to call their own.

This Tender Land Amazon

Over the course of one unforgettable summer, these four orphans will journey into the unknown and cross paths with others who are adrift, from struggling farmers and traveling faith healers to displaced families and lost souls of all kinds. With the feel of a modern classic, *This Tender Land* is an enÂ-thralling, big-hearted epic that shows how the magnificent American landscape connects us all, haunts our dreams, and makes us whole.

The best historical fiction doesn't just take me to the time and place depicted in the story. It takes me into the heart and soul of people who lived there and then. This is precisely what William Kent Krueger has done in this beautifully written story of four orphans on their journey to find safety, home, and love while discovering themselves along the way. He does this with characters who are everything to this telling of history, whose stories tell of the extreme hardships of the Great Depress

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This book is over 450 pages and there's not a wasted word. I'll leave plot details to others but just say that on their journey from a small town in Minnesota to St.Louis, they encounter dangerous situations and trials, mean spirited people like the ones they are running from, but also kind and generous people who will restore theirs and the readers faith in humanity. They find people suffering the losses of the Great Depression, some of whom have lost homes, reminders of the awful things done to Native Americans, but there will be the beautiful music that Odie plays on his harmonica and the fabulous stories he tells of The Vagabonds to help get them through some of the harder days. While the book reflects so much that is true, it is a work of fiction and there will be times when your imagination will be tested, but it is worth the testing.

You shouldn't skip the author's note in the end which describes his research process, not just reading books but by traveling to places where the characters traveled. In a letter to readers at the beginning of the book, Krueger writes, "In asking you to read *This Tender Land*, I am, in a way, offering you my heart." What can I say to that except, thanks to you for touching mine.

This ARC was provided by the publisher, Atria via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

This Tender Land

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This Tender Land Review

NOW AVAILABLE

After reading this book I think there should be a separate genre for incredibly well written books that will endure the test of time, this is truly a "masterpiece". It is literary fiction, adventure, mystery, a lesson in morality and forgiveness, and so much more. To understand this book you really MUST READ it, and I seldom say that about a book. It is every bit as good as Ordinary Grace by this author.

The time frame for the book is during the Great Depression, it's 1932 and ***NOW AVAILABLE***

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The time frame for the book is during the Great Depression, it's 1932 and we will follow the exploits and adventures of four "vagabonds" which they named themselves. All four of the children were orphans, one a Native American. In the author's notes Mr. Krueger states: "The river voyage upon which Odie O'Banion and his fellow Vagabonds embark in the summer of 1932 is a mythic journey. The reality of the Great Depression landscape that serves as its backdrop, however, was etched into the memory of many". The Great Depression was hard on almost everyone, but it was particularly devastating to families.

The story opens at the Lincoln School for Native American children. The idea for this school was to take children from their families, have them be boarders at the school and take the "Indian" out of the children. They were stripped of their heritage in every way, they were forbidden to speak their native language, taken from their families and the homes in the wilderness that they had known. The reality of the school, however, was that there was a lot of physical and mental abuse wrought upon these children. There was little good food and clothing and lots of punishment.

The four travelers who decide to escape the school are Odie and Albert O'Banion, who were in this school because the county school for orphaned children was full. Mosie is a Native American who cannot speak for reasons I will leave you to discover, then there is six year old Emmy who is terrified of the Brinkmans and beg the group to take her with them when her mother was killed in the wake of a tornado.

The novel is narrated by Odie. They travel the Gilead river in Minnesota and meet many people, some kind, some terrible who use the children as farm labor and more. The children endure much suffering and do a lot of soul searching, trying to find what they are really looking for, which for Odie is "home". They are also constantly aware that the Brinkmans who run the school are trying to find

This Tender Land

them by all means, it is little Emmy that they really want back, to raise as their own. They also want the money and papers that the children took as "insurance" against the Brinkmans if they are ever caught.

As I read this book I felt as Odie stated in the book "With every turn of the river since I'd left Lincoln School, the world had become broader, its mysteries more complex, its possibilities infinite".

This is a beautifully crafted novel, the prose flows like the river and I truly felt myself getting lost in the story. I cared deeply about each of the children. I also learned about shantytowns and how much the depression hurt everyone and sometimes turned neighbors against neighbors in their search for work and a means to support themselves and their families. There are so many characters, wonderfully described that I couldn't even begin to name them all or this review would be many pages long.

This is absolutely one of the best books that I have read in the past year. I recommend it to everyone, from teenagers looking to learn a little bit about the past, to everyone else who want to revisit that time period and follow a wonderful adventure.

Many thanks to the author, the publisher, and Wendy Sheanin VP of retail sales for providing me with an ARC of this amazing novel.

Publication date is set for September 3, 2019, don't miss it! ...more

When one reads a book that is almost 500 pages, and upon completion is not ready for the book to end, in fact could continue on for another 500 pages, then you know a book deserves 5 stars. At least for me. Four children, three horribly mistreated at the Lincoln school for Indians, make a life changing journey. Although only one boy is a Native American, all are orphans. All have no choice but to be on the run. All will change in big and small ways during this journey.

Although this may sound like a YA novel, it is not, it deals with adult issues. It takes place in the shadow of the Great Depression, when many are homeless and finding different ways to live. These children each have a different talent, and have formed themselves into a new family called the Vagabonds. They crawled into my heart and nested there, are still there this morning, though I finished this last evening. . On their journey they find those who will help, and those who would hurt. Riding the rails, Hooverilles, and a traveling healing show, are some historical happenings during this time period. All the main characters in this book have their own stories, are all interesting characters, good or bad. Although Odie is our main narrator, telling this story when he is in his eighties, one gets a good sense of what each

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character is made out of, who they are. Watching them change on their journey is a joy.

It can be likened to Huck Finn and his journey on the river. A little Wizard of Oz, because these children are looking for a home, and meet many who offer them different things. Yes, some are even evil, with evil intentions. But ultimately, it is about finding family in different places, about loyalty, finding oneself, and finding a safe place to land. It left me feeling hopeful, a little nostalgic, bittersweet and just a little sad. For me it was an amazing reading experience, one I hope future readers will share.

ARC from Edelweiss. ...more

This Tender Land Release Date

I'd give this one more than five stars if I could. I am a huge fan of William Kent Krueger and absolutely loved Ordinary Grace. I wasn't sure anything could top it. Well, hard to say if this is better, but it's equally as good. WKK is just such an amazing writer. He's got it all, well turned phrases, engaging plot, characters that draw you in immediately and feel so real you're convinced you've met them.

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Home is where the heart is. And Odie, Albert, Moses and Emmy are all looking for their own versions of home. Odie, Albert and Moses are all orphans at the start of the book and never really had homes. Emmy loses her mother in a freak accident. When they're all forced to flee, they take to the river. Told over the course of one summer, the book paints a perfect picture of the 1932 Midwest - farmers desperate to survive, faith healers, folks living in Hoovervilles.

This book tugs at your heart. I will admit to crying more than once. It deals with loss in so many forms, but also the faith to survive and move forward and the need to forgive. Of all that we're asked to give others in this life, the most difficult to offer may be forgiveness.

This book seems destined to be a modern day classic. WKK cites Twain, Homer, Sinclair Lewis and Dickens as sources of inspiration. He has done an inordinate amount of research, which he outlines in his Author's Note. But as he also states, 'the river voyage upon which Odie O'Banion and his fellow Vagabonds embark in the summer of 1932 is a mythic journey.' Or as Odie says at the end of the book, 'in every good tale there is a seed of truth, and from that seed a lovely story grows. Some of what I've told you is true and some...well, let's just call it the bloom on the rose bush.' Run, don't walk, to buy this one as soon as it becomes available. I truly can't tout it enough.

A huge thank you to netgalley and Atria Books for an advance copy of this book. ...more

"I've poured the best of myself into this story and I invite you to experience all of its remarkable twists and turns. As Odie says in the very beginning 'Open yourself to every possibility, for there is nothing your heart can imagine that is not so.' Blessings, -William Kent Krueger

True to his word, William Kent Krueger did pour his heart and soul into this book. His writing is both moving and beautiful. I found myself highlighting large sections of text. He has the heart of a poet. If

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True to his word, William Kent Krueger did pour his heart and soul into this book. His writing is both moving and beautiful. I found myself highlighting large sections of text. He has the heart of a poet. If you have read one of his other books Ordinary Grace you will know what I mean. He has the gift to make everyday events, and ordinary people exquisite. His main character Odie is also a storyteller and this book has passages where Odie is telling stories to his friends.

"The tale I am going to tell is of a summer long ago. Of killing and kidnapping and children pursued by demons of a thousand names. There will be courage in this story and cowardice. There will be love and betrayal. And, of course, there will be hope. In the end, isn't that what every good story is about?"

The book opens as an old man, Odie O'Banion is looking back at his life, specifically back to Minnesota, 1932 when he, his older brother, Albert, and their friends, Moses and Emmy embark on a journey. A journey to escape the horrors that exist at the Lincoln School, a home where Native American children are being educated after being separated from their families. Although, Odie, Albert and Emmy are not Native American they all under the care of the woman who runs the school. As they make their escape, the four meet some interesting people. Some good, some bad, but all with stories of their own.

"Stories are the sweet fruit of my existence and I share them gladly."

The beauty in this book is not just in the wonderful writing, but in the descriptions of the people and the time/era in which they live in. I felt as if I was right there in the canoe as a quiet observer as they made their escape and had their interactions with others. Odie is a young teen when he goes on this journey and matures along the way as he confronts the harsh realities of life. He is not the only character who changes and grows. The others change and grow as well.

There are discussions about God in this book. God as a tornado, God as a savior and God as being part of the land. There is a level of spirituality that runs through the book, but this book is never preachy or overbearing. Some of the characters in this book have faith while other's question theirs. The author is not asking the reader to have it, nor is he trying to cram anything down the readers throat.

"Ask me, God's right here. In the dirt, the rain, the sky, the trees, the apples, the stars in the cottonwoods. In you and me, too. It's all connected to God. Sure, this is hard work, but it's good work because it's part of what connects us to this land, Buck. This beautiful, tender land."

I savored every page of this beautifully written book. This book has a little bit of everything. It has a little bit of magic, a little bit of drama, some history, some romance, coming of age and learning about and knowing yourself. It's also about acceptance, courage, responsibility, friendship, family, and love. Family comes in all forms and these children created a loving cohesive family unit which was a joy to read.

This Tender Land

I highly recommend this book. READ IT! When you are done with this book, do yourself a favor and pick up Ordinary Grace and read that as well.

Thank you to Atria Books and NetGalley who provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. The thought and opinions expressed in this review are my own. ...more

This Tender Land

This Tender Land Kirkus

NO SPOILERS...

“This Tender Land”, is a mesmerizing tale with wonderful characters, rich themes, extraordinary storytelling, delicious writing...with dialogue that sprinkles gold nuggets in our hearts, gut, and mind. A couple of times I thought: “Stand By Me” - meets “Deliverance”meets Huckleberry Finn. It has those “type” of a “feelings”.

I’m pleased as a pickle to say this novel is every bit as good as “Ordinary Grace” ...(another book by Krueger that’s one of my favorites).....

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starting with a wonderful note to the readers by the author...to the very end....and the wonderful Epilogue.

The experience of having read this novel is pretty special. Its definitely one of the best books this year.,

Twelve year old Odie Banion, narrates the story. Albert, his brother, is four years older than Odie. We get to know these brothers well, as well as many other characters.

The heart of this story focuses on four children - [the Vegabonds]..

Mose and Emmy are the other children that are part of the gang.

There are so many great things to say about this book - the charm of the kids -

Odie’s gift for storytelling himself - his harmonica playing - (music gives him and others solace)...his grappling with God and religion. (there are many scenes about God: believing or not)...

Themes of grief....loss of parents...coming of age...injustice/ abuse/ and cruelty....family, love, faith...

hope....forgiveness..... sacrifice....racial inequality, economic hardships...self-identity...the basic understanding of human nature....

and kinship of protecting those we love.

I discovered symbolism & wisdom.....even from a little rat named “Faria”

So much to enjoy about the characters:

Alberta’s intelligence - and awareness-

Emmy’s sweetness and incredible wisdom for such a little girl - all of age six -

This Tender Land

Mose who can't verbally speak - rather speaks sign language (the other children are also fluent in sign language)....

A rich mixture of adventure - tragedy- and healing.....infused with transformative verities.

William Kent Krueger's novel moves in a current - slow or as tumultuous as whitewater rapids.

ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE, A BOOK COMES ALONG THAT HAS SUCH WONDERFUL CHARACTERS AND MARVELOUS PROSE..... that we read it as much for the pure joy it offers on every page as to find out how it ends. THIS IS THAT BOOK!!!

Odie ...LOOKING BACK:

“From the height of a certain wisdom acquired across many decades, I looked down now on those four children traveling a meandering river whose end was unknown to them.

Even across the distance of time, I hurt for them and pray for them still. Our former selves are never dead• .

Thank You Netgalley, Atria Books, and William Kent Krueger

...more

5 AMAZING STARS!

The story takes place in the 1930's during the Great Depression in Minnesota. Odie and Albert are two white orphaned teenage brothers who live at the Lincoln school. It's a school for Native American Indian children who are forcibly separated from their parents and sent there to be educated. Four and Albert are forced to live there as well, with the Indians. They were the only two white orphans in the school. Mrs Brickman who was known as The Black Witch was the school superinten 5 AMAZING STARS!

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Albert and Odie escape from the school with their two friends Nose and Emmy. They steal a canoe heading towards Mississippi. They are so happy that they have their freedom and are on a journey. They meet some lost souls and others. They are on a great adventure.

This Tender Land

This story was Amazing! It was an epic adventure story. I was glued to the pages from the very beginning. I loved Ordinary Grace but I loved this one more. I loved the journey where this book took me. It reminded me of the story of Huck Finn. If you didn't like that story, I think you will still love this one.

I loved the characters and loved this book more than Ordinary Grace. This book had everything that I loved in a book. This book was so long but I felt like it was very fast paced. I cant believe I waited so long too read this. I knew it was going to good but I wasnt expecting it to be as amazing as it was. I just fell in love with the characters and he brought them to life. This was beautifully written. I felt that when the author writes he paints pictures. I could see everything vividly in my mind while reading it. It amazed me. I think this is one of the best books I ever read. Its so unique and different from other books. I was actually sad when it ended because I wanted more. I wanted this book to go on forever.

This was a Traveling Sister read and so far we all loved it and it was a fun discussion.

I want to thank Netgalley, Atria Books and the author for the arc of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Available Now [...more](#)

This Tender Land A Novel

A quintessential Midwestern American fable, *This Tender Land* is a coming of age novel and a tale of an epic journey in the form of homage to *The Odyssey* and *Huckleberry Finn*. During The Great Depression, four orphans runaway from an abusive Indian school by canoeing the rivers of Minnesota in order to reach St Louis and the protection of an Aunt. As the river turns, they meet a variety of people along the way struggling to survive the profound effects of the catastrophic economic downturn. Some A quintessential Midwestern American fable, *This Tender Land* is a coming of age novel and a tale of an epic journey in the form of homage to *The Odyssey* and *Huckleberry Finn*. During The Great Depression, four orphans runaway from an abusive Indian school by canoeing the rivers of Minnesota in order to reach St Louis and the protection of an Aunt. As the river turns, they meet a variety of people along the way struggling to survive the profound effects of the catastrophic economic downturn. Some of these people are as they appear to be while others are not. Through his experiences the narrator and storyteller, Odie, tries to come to terms with God. At times, he believes in the wrathful, vengeful God of the Old Testament and at other times he believes in the loving, forgiving God of the New Testament. Ultimately, this is a novel about searching and recognition including the search for security and home, the search for self knowledge, and the recognition of religious hypocrisy as well as authentic faith.

...more

5 +++++ glorious stars

I have been waiting for a long time to say this about a book, and now I can: This novel is a masterpiece. It is William Kent Krueger at his very best - it is clear he threw his entire heart and soul into this book. I will buy a hardback copy (something I never do) and keep it forever.

Set during The Great Depression in 1932 in my home state of Minnesota we follow our protagonist, 12-year-old Odie, and his three fellow travelers (self-dubbed The Four Vagabonds) on their search 5 +++++ glorious stars

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Set during The Great Depression in 1932 in my home state of Minnesota we follow our protagonist, 12-year-old Odie, and his three fellow travelers (self-dubbed The Four Vagabonds) on their search for "belonging" and "home." The story is told solely through the eyes of Odie, and the story line is linear. The Four Vagabonds™ journey is not easy; in fact, it is difficult, very difficult. Along the way they meet a variety of different people, many as bad off as they are, but others that are very kind and willing to help them. The Vagabonds endure much suffering, but also display considerable strength and engage in a great deal of soul-searching. Odie finds it difficult to believe in a God who would let these things happen to him and his companions, but he also can't help but think many of the

This Tender Land

unfortunate events are unintentionally due to his own actions. He tries to do the right thing, but carries much guilt when things go wrong. This is a spiritual journey, one that I almost felt honored to be on with our characters.

The story is extremely well written. The prose is exquisite. Mr. Krueger has the ability to set a scene and a mood beautifully without excessive words. I have always been awed by his ability to create just the right atmosphere in his stories, and this one is no exception. Of interest, a chunk of the story takes place in the fictional town of New Bremen, Minnesota, the setting of *Ordinary Grace*, which takes place twenty-nine years later during the summer of 1961.

This Tender Land flows seamlessly and the chapter lengths are just right. As always, Mr. Krueger includes Native American characters in his book, not something I usually look for, but I always learn something by the inclusion of our Native Americans. I came to care deeply for Odie, but could not see a good end for him. This, along with being immersed in events of the odyssey, kept me fascinated and glued to the pages. Best of all, the author includes a wonderful epilogue that gives us the highlights of our characters' lives over the next several decades. Some things intentionally remain a bit uncertain, but that was fine with me.

After publishing his brilliant *Ordinary Grace* in March 2013, Mr. Krueger embarked on the writing of a companion piece, also called *This Tender Land*. He finished the manuscript, but was not satisfied with the end result and did not feel it represented his best work. Much to the disappointment of his publisher, he asked to have the project abandoned so that he could start over with an entirely different concept. That was three years ago. The current version of *This Tender Land* is the result of the rewrite and is well worth the long six and a half year wait. Best of all, as you will see in the Author's Note, Mr. Krueger is deeply fulfilled and content with the new version. I think it says a lot about the author that he is unwilling to put out something that was not perfect in his mind. I doubt we will ever see a "co-writer" on any of his books in the future.

Write what you know. I have the feeling that is what William Kent Krueger does here. *This Tender Land* gives us insight into this man that we saw a glimpse of in *Ordinary Grace*. I absolutely love his Cork O'Connor series, but I so hope we will see another stand alone novel in a similar vein to these last two. I will happily wait six and a half years to see that happen.

If you only read one book this year, make it be this one.

Many thanks to Net Galley, Atria Books, and William Kent Krueger for gifting me an advanced review copy of this book. Opinions are mine alone and are not biased in any way.

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This Tender Land Barnes And Noble

SO. DAMN. GOOD. "Of all that we're asked to give others in this life, the most difficult to offer may be forgiveness." It all begins in HELL and some of what's told here is true."What happened in the summer of 1932 is most important to those who experienced it, and there are not many of us left." Odie O'Banion's life actually began in Missouri Ozark country, but now orphaned in Minnesota, he and older brother Albert need a miracle to get out of Lincoln School, the only white boys in a school for Indian children. Odie is a tough little ingenious fellow who plays a mean harmonica, tells a great story, and always....always seems to cause trouble resulting in yet another visit to the cell....better known as the quiet room. But don't let the name fool you, it's not so quiet when DiMarco shows up to do Thelma the black-hearted witches' bidding. Whenever there seems to be a ray of hope for Odie and Albert to escape a horrendous work assignment or the wrath of the witch, disaster or tragedy shows its ugly face. But one day after a fierce tornado....and another failed plan, Odie, Albert, friend Mose, a Sioux Indian and little gifted Emmy find themselves on the run and wanted by authorities....for much more than just escape from the horrors of the school. Taking the canoe down the Gilead toward the Mississippi and their new destination is a dangerous journey wrought with many perils, so many they meet desperate and struggling to survive make life scary for the youngsters....and it's not just humans who are looming....there's Lucifer. THIS TENDER LAND is a wonderful coming-of-age adventure, a story of hard times and hopefulness that carries a religious undertone with children that seem wise and capable beyond their years, but also make poor life-threatening decisions as they venture forward toward their dream of a better future. As with Krueger's ORDINARY GRACE another winner for this reader! ***What a memorable novel to have as my 200th NetGalley read! Arc provided by Atria Books in exchange for an honest review*** ...more

"Nothing is permanent in this world, not even our troubles." (Charlie Chaplin)

William Kent Krueger sweeps aside the present and takes us to an era in American history in which hope was at a far distance and pain and heartache were daily visitors. It's 1932 and the Great Depression has dug its roots deeply into the American landscape. The Haves had far less and the Have Nots had even less than nothing.

The Lincoln School was set upon the banks of the Gilead River in Fremont County in Minnesota. To "Nothing is permanent in this world, not even our troubles." (Charlie Chaplin)

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Nots had even less than nothing.

The Lincoln School was set upon the banks of the Gilead River in Fremont County in Minnesota. To the outside world it looked to be a refuge for orphaned and abandoned Native American children. But to those who resided within its walls, it was a pit of abuse, shame, and mistreatment. Run by Thelma and Clive Buckman, the Lincoln School threatened children with severe punishment in the Quiet Room while the adults ran amok.

It's here that we meet two brothers, Odie and Albert O'Banion, who were taken there because the county's children's home was full. Mose Washington is a young mute Native American who can never speak of the horror visited upon him as a very young child. Added to the mix is six year old Emmy whose widowed mother dies and she takes to the road with the boys as one of the Vagabonds.

Odie is the breath and the heart of this intriguing story. It is through Odie's eyes and voice that we experience a bold escape in the night. Odie's mischief making finds him almost as a nightly occupant of the Quiet Room in which his only friend is a rat he's named Faria. Faria lives on crumbs tossed in the corner by Odie. Odie's only precious possession is a harmonica tucked in his shirt that he's learned to play with such passion.....passion suppressed by his current surroundings.

I'll let the talented William Kent Krueger take you by the hand as the children escape and take to the river by canoe. Their encounters will reveal the harshness of the times and the cruelty inflicted upon the weak by the strong. The Great Depression was a time of disconnect for some who grabbed what they could at the expense of others. It was also a period of deep compassion and bonding by those who readily recognized the bitter taste of loss and hopelessness in the souls of their fellow Americans. Odie refers to God as the Tornado God who is deaf to the cries of the suffering. "Life warps you in terrible ways."

This Tender Land is a reminder of days long gone in which folks felt a gripping hold from the rivers and lakes and fields that bind us all to this earth. Wherever you stand.....wherever you place your feet.....there is a connection to those who came before us and to those who have yet to leave their imprint. This Tender Land will leave its mark on you, the reader, for some time to come.

I received a copy of this book through NetGalley for an honest review. My thanks to Simon and Schuster (Atria Books) and to William Kent Krueger for the opportunity. ...more

This Tender Land

This Tender Land By William Krueger

NOW AVAILABLE!!!

“Maybe it really is like it says in the Bible,” I offered. “God’s a shepherd and we’re his flock and he watches over us.”

For a long while, Albert didn’t say anything. I listened to that kid crying in the dark because he felt lost and alone and believed no one cared.

Finally Albert whispered, “Listen, Odie, what does a shepherd eat?”

I didn’t know where he was going with that, so I didn’t reply.

“His flock,” Albert told me. “One by one.”

william kent krueger has written eleventy billion NOW AVAILABLE!!!

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william kent krueger has written eleventy billion books, and yet this is the first of ‘em i’ve read. i have been missing out.

my deepest pleasure in reading comes from the story, and discovering a gifted storyteller, as simple as that may seem, is as rare as it is exciting. so many authors lack a natural aptitude for storytelling, or are trying too hard to reinvent the wheel, focusing on overworked stylistic zazz at their story’s expense, so when i find an author who can tell a story that sucks me in without resorting to distracting bells and whistles, i am thrilled.

the narrator of this book is a self-proclaimed storyteller, and he’s as good as his words—sensitive, observant, unfussy.

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“There’s my star,” she said, pointing toward the upper glimmer in the cup of the Big Dipper.

“Your star? You own it?”

“I claimed it. There are more stars in the sky than people on earth, so there are plenty to go around. I claimed that one because if you follow the line that connects it with the one below, you’ll find the North Star. It helps me know where I’m going. What star is yours?”

“The one below,” I said. “The one that connects and helps show the way.”

that’s a pretty on-the-nose description of what a storyteller is and does, and the novel is actually framed as a story being told; the 80-something-year-old odie o’banion recounting the events of the summer of 1932 to his assembled great-grandchildren. a twelve-year-old orphan at the time, odie was living in minnesota at a school for native american children taken from their parents, forced to disavow their culture and language, under the authority of the brickmans; a relentlessly cruel couple overseeing a staff who, for the most part, exploit the children as farm labor, provide very little food, and use physical and sexual abuse as punishment, sometimes resulting in a child’s death. odie and his older brother albert are the only two white children living at the school, but they are not treated any differently; odie in particular is frequently locked in a room overnight for his infractions with only a rat for company.

their situation at the school becomes untenable, and the brothers are forced to flee, escaping along with their friend moses; a sioux boy whose tongue was cut out when he was only four and communicates using sign language, and little emmy, the newly-orphaned daughter of their beloved teacher. traveling by canoe, they begin to make their way towards st. louis, where aunt julia, the boys’ only living relative, lives. their escape is complicated by the fact that the brickmans, who want to adopt emmy, are in pursuit, claiming she has been kidnapped. coming so soon after the lindbergh kidnapping, the authorities and the press are on high alert, making their getaway that much more difficult.

it’s a straightforward coming-of-age story with light magical realism and motifs drawn from other journey-based narratives like the work of mark twain and the odyssey—there’s even a cyclops. it’s also an excellent historical novel, exposing the children to the realities of life during a national crisis; the hardships and desperation, but also the prevailing sense of community and hope. it’s got all the big-novel themes of good and evil, first love, salvation, friendship and family and all the diverging paths on the search for a home.

it’s also about the pains of growing up and growing apart—although the four of them leave together, it becomes clear along the way that they are also embarking on individual journeys, developing into a wonderfully bittersweet tone.

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We risked a fire that night and sat together, talking quietly around the flames, as we had on many nights since weâ€™d taken to the rivers. It began to feel to me as if what had been broken was coming together again, but I knew it would never be exactly the same. With every turn of the river, we were changing, becoming different people, and for the first time I understood that the journey we were on wasnâ€™t just about getting to Saint Louis.

iâ€™m blabbing on and on and iâ€™ve already cut out huge chunks of this overlong reader-response, but it was just so deeply satisfying to my own readerly sensibilities that i got a little carried away.

although they might not be â€œtrueâ€• readalikes, this put me in mind of *Beasts of Extraordinary Circumstance* and *Circus of the Queens: The Fortune Teller's Fate*, and i will definitely check out at least one of the authorâ€™s previous eleventy billion nineteen books.

come to my blog!! ...more

FIVE I NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF IF I GIVE LESS TO THIS FANTASTIC JOURNEY and I OFFICIALLY DECLARE THAT I'M IN LOVE WITH THIS BOOK STARS!

This book was a beautiful symphony to my ears, refreshing smell of nature to my nose, healing hands to my soul, heart-warming, emotional touch to my heart, lyrical, poetical, nurturing elements to my brain. There was not much words to express my feelings how I loved this book and how I enjoyed each word, sentence, each of the journey those orphans have taken, each i FIVE I NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF IF I GIVE LESS TO THIS FANTASTIC JOURNEY and I OFFICIALLY DECLARE THAT I'M IN LOVE WITH THIS BOOK STARS!

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I definitely savored it and thought I havenâ€™t read something such an amazing story for so long. Itâ€™s the best historical fiction iâ€™ve read on this year.

This book made me cry!

This book made me smile!

This book made me rebel and scream!

This book woke up my anger against unfairness, my unconditional love to the all children, my concerns about never ending fight for the justice, equality and changing the system to create a better world.

This is the moving, heart-wrenching journey of four Native American children, narrated by Odie

This Tender Land

Oâ€™Banion who was just 12 years old but mature enough to take this long journey and a talented story-teller. Other children were Albert, Mose who can only communicate by singing and another gifted, lovely character (Indeed after Odie, she became my favorite, it was impossible to adore her attributes) Emmy.

Their hopes, beliefs, endurances, strengths, survival skills, wisdoms are tested throughout the trip taken place between Minnesota to St. Louis. It was not only a road trip, it was their trip to be grown up and learning the basic rules how to survive in their new world after Great Depression.

They encountered too many merciless, mean, savage people but also they met kind, generous people who extend their helping hands which gave them enough joy, hope to survive the hand the life dealt. This book is about friendship, bravery, faith, struggle, family, brother and sisterhood and finally importance of acceptance the othersâ€™ differences. It was such a pleasurable, tear dropping, saddening, soul-brushing reading. I can happily admit that I enjoyed every second of it. ...more