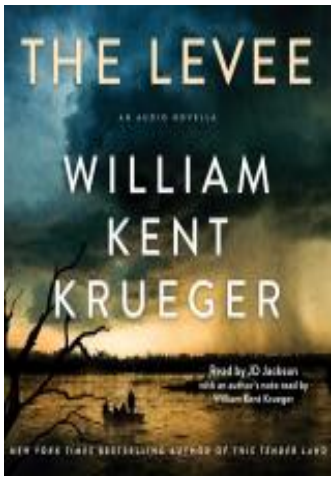
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The Levee: An Audio Novella

written by William Kent Krueger and read by JD Jackson, with an author's note read by William Kent Krueger



About the Book

An audio original novella from the bestselling author of ORDINARY GRACE and THIS TENDER LAND, THE LEVEE is a powerful, captivating story of a family, a storm, a complicated rescue and the true cost of survival.

It?s 1927, and the most devastating flood in American history has swelled the Mississippi River to a width of 80 miles. In an attempt to save a family trapped by the rising water, four men in a tiny rowboat battle the treacherous flow. Three are convicts, on loan from the local prison and pressed into service. The fourth, the leader of the team, is driven by his own hidden motives. But to their surprise upon arrival at Ballymore, an ancestral home protected by a high, circular levee, not everyone in the family feels the need to be saved. Pride, greed, loyalty and even love create their own complex currents behind the massive wall. As the threat from the flood increases and time ticks away, the crew and the family must decide on a course of action, and a desperate plan is hatched to save the weakening levee and all it was built to protect.

THE LEVEE is a propulsive, heartfelt tale of courage, cowardice and sacrifice in a historic moment when the indomitable human spirit is pitted against the awesome and destructive power of nature.

Discussion Guide

1. Consider the title of THE LEVEE. What images or experiences does it bring up for you? What does a levee symbolize historically, and in modern times?

2. Before we?re introduced to any human characters, we?re introduced to the river. How is the river described throughout the book? Does it resemble any bodies of water you?ve experienced?

3. We?re introduced to the four boatmen soon afterwards --- Mobley, Boone, Cassidy and Dobbs. Based on their

descriptions, which man caught your attention first? What did you originally think brought these men together in the boat?

4. What clues are we given about who Mobley is and where he comes from? What does he forsake when he becomes a preacher? Why does he change his mind about his chosen profession? Why do you think he ultimately makes the choices he makes?

5. THE LEVEE is told from Dobbs? perspective. If you could read the story from another?s perspective, who would you choose? What new insights would you be able to glean from that perspective?

6. Were you surprised to discover what time period the book was set in? Could this book have been set in another time period? Why or why not?

7. Dobbs believes he?s been a ?fool before, which got him put behind those high stone walls? of the prison. Cassidy indicates that marriage is a ?fool?s promise.? What makes characters foolish in this story? Are there times foolishness could be confused for something else, like loyalty or pride?

8. How did you feel when the men crested the bluff and realized how wide the river had grown? How does this scene shift the reality of what?s perceived to be possible between man and nature? Discuss a time when you?ve been confronted with the power of nature or the limits of man.

9. How does the mission on the bluff play out? Is it a successful mission? What do we learn about the characters through this event?

10. At one point, Dobbs says of the bluff ?it?s not a face...that?s simply how we interpret what we see.? Isaac replies ?and how is that different from anything else in this life, sir?? What do you make of this exchange? What other interpretations occur over the course of the story? Are these interpretations correct? Or subject to individual discretion?

11. After Ada explains to Dobbs the reason that Sylvia won?t leave her father, he thinks ?freedom is an empty boat only a hundred yards away. But it might as well be a million miles.? Loyalty and freedom feel at odds here. Is there freedom in loyalty? Or only ever a sort of obligation?

12. What do you make of Cassidy as we learn more about this story? Does learning about his past and motivations make him more sympathetic? Or do you believe, like Mobley does, that Cassidy made choices in his life that led him to where he is?

13. At the funeral for the three men, Boone sings an African-American spiritual, ?Peace Like a River.? What are the positive aspects of the river, and the negatives? What does it mean to be ?like a river??

14. Between man, nature and God, who do you think is the most powerful? What do you think of Kane?s concept of dominion, that God gave humans dominion to ?divine the forces of nature??

15. The Great War and fighting are routinely invoked throughout the story. What are the men in the story actually fighting against?

16. Why do you think Dobbs was committed to seeing the project through? What do you think he does with his renewed chance at life?

Author Bio

William Kent Krueger is the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE RIVER WE REMEMBER, THIS TENDER LAND, ORDINARY GRACE (winner of the Edgar Award for best novel), and the original audio novella THE LEVEE, as well as 22 acclaimed books in the Cork O?Connor mystery series, including GOD'S COUNTRY, APOSTLE'S COVE, SPIRIT CROSSING, LIGHTNING STRIKE and FOX CREEK. He lives in the Twin Cities with his family.

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