



The Western Star

Craig Johnson

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The thirteenth novel in Craig Johnson's beloved *New York Times* bestselling Longmire series, the basis for the hit Netflix series *Longmire*

Sheriff Walt Longmire is enjoying a celebratory beer after a weapons certification at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy when a younger sheriff confronts him with a photograph of twenty-five armed men standing in front of a Challenger steam locomotive. It takes him back to when, fresh from the battlefields of Vietnam, then-deputy Walt accompanied his mentor Lucian to the annual Wyoming Sheriff's Association junket held on the excursion train known as the Western Star, which ran the length of Wyoming from Cheyenne to Evanston and back. Armed with his trusty Colt .45 and a paperback of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, the young Walt was ill-prepared for the machinations of twenty-four veteran sheriffs, let alone the cavalcade of curious characters that accompanied them.

The photograph—along with an upcoming parole hearing for one of the most dangerous men Walt has encountered in a lifetime of law enforcement—hurtles the sheriff into a head-on collision of past and present, placing him and everyone he cares about squarely on the tracks of runaway revenge.

The Western Star Details

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Author : Craig Johnson

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From Reader Review The Western Star for online ebook

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Well, this was not the strongest book in the series. As much as I like Walt was I disappointed to see Vic reduced to just having a small part in this book. Although it was pretty cool to meet a young Walt Longmire newlywed and as a new deputy to Sheriff Connolly. However, the ending was promising. Been waiting for Walt to get even with his archnemesis.

Spartacus says

Disappointing.

I enjoyed getting to know young Walt and young(er) Lucian a bit. That was fun. Unfortunately, we get almost no time with Henry and Vic, and wherever they're present in this book they could easily be replaced by cardboard cutouts without any loss of characterization. It would have been nice if this short book was a bit longer, and showed us young Henry, and involved Henry and Vic in the current timeline portions of the story.

Then there's the last 50 pages. Massive shift in the book bringing back a previous book's overheated storyline (which had been thankfully missing up until that point) and then finishing with an unwelcome cliff hanger.

Julie says

The Western Star by Craig Johnson is a 2017 Viking publication.

This is the thirteenth book in the Walt Longmire series.

‘He did it, she did it, or they all did it’

Walt never misses the parole hearing, which takes place every four years, for a prisoner over at Cheyenne, who happens to be the most dangerous criminal he ever encountered. This time, though, the prisoner in question is dying and seeking compassionate release. As Walt continues to oppose the release, he is taken on a trip down memory lane, back to the seventies, when he agreed to accompany Lucien to a Wyoming Sheriff's Association junket, which was held on the excursion train called, **‘The Western Star’**.

It is always a treat to check in with Walt Longmire. This installment is slightly different as it bounces between the past and the present. But, for the most part the bulk of the story is focused on Walt's past.

This does mean that once more a few of our very favorite characters have a much smaller role, but we do get to know Walt, a little better, and even get to hear from Martha, too.

As Walt boards the train, with twenty-four veteran Sheriffs, he could never have imagined how the events that unfolded would haunt him all these years, or how they would collide with the present in an incredible twist of fate.

In some ways, this story is like a backhanded compliment to Agatha Christie's *'Murder on the Orient Express'*, the novel Walt carries with him aboard the train.

I thought this was a nice touch and enjoyed the tone of the story while Walt has a battle of wits with twenty-four seasoned sheriffs, and murder follows them aboard the train. Anyone familiar with Christie's work will appreciate the homage to her techniques and how they applied to his story.

I never saw the surprise twist coming and was impressed with clever plotting, all of which was very entertaining... until the past catches up with the present. The story takes on a much more sinister tone at that point and ends with one of those awful – 'to be continued' storylines.

Once I finished the book, my first thought was how other devoted fans of this series would respond to this installment. I think some may have mixed feelings about it, but I thought it was a great bridge story that will segue nicely into what will most assuredly be the ultimate showdown.

I enjoyed the setting aboard the train, the 'whodunit' mystery, and getting a rare peek at the young Walt Longmire. I was enjoying the golden age nostalgia so much, I was ill prepared for the jolt out my reverie, dropping me back into the present with a thud. It was hard to wrap my head around how everything was tied up together, but it was pretty tense.

Overall, I enjoyed this book just as much as all the other Longmire novels, despite this being the second book in a row where key players took a backseat. But, I have a feeling, everyone will be back with a vengeance in the next installment, which promises to be one heck of a wild ride.

4 stars

Rusty Burlingame says

I was very disappointed. Easily the worst Longmire book.

The whole thing is less than 300 pages, and nothing much happens for the first 70. I don't mind the dual timelines, but the ending to one is ridiculously bad, and the ending to the other is a cliffhanger.

Two hundred pages in the middle were pretty good, and I enjoy the company of the various characters. Hopefully the next book is a lot better.

Thomas says

This is book 13 in the Longmire series. I have enjoyed all of them. This book is told in two threads, one present day and one in 1972. They do connect at the end, and there is a cliffhanger for those of you annoyed by cliffhangers. The book opens in the present day with Walt coming to a parole hearing for a murderer he arrested in many years ago. Then the flashback sequence starts in the same chapter--somewhat confusing and

it took me a while to separate the two. We learn more about Walt and his start as an Absaroka County Deputy Sheriff. The flashback sequence takes place during a special steam trip across Wyoming and has some steam train trivia if you are a steam train buff. This was a library book.

3.5 stars

My wife also read this book. The cliffhanger and the alternating threads did not bother her. She says 4.5 stars.

Kristi Lamont says

Ever read a book in a series and think well, the author wrote this just to get to the next "real" book? Well, that's what this felt like to me at the end. Also, and I really am sad about this, it feels like Craig Johnson has lost touch with the core ethos of younger Walt, Henry and Lucian. Which matters a lot when a great deal of the book is set in an earlier era. I dunno, the whole thing felt kinda thin and rushed. But it's probably me with the real issue, from having gotten so involved with the TV series.

?Susan? says

I love all of the books in this series and it should definitely be started at the beginning as to get all the nuances of each wonderful character. This addition takes Walt way back into his past, when he first comes home from the Vietnam War. A fun train trip turns into murder on and off the tracks.

For those of you who enjoy The Walt Longmire Series on Netflix, please note that the books are not the same stories as the TV series.

Truman32 says

There are pedigreed dogs like the ostentatious Lowchen, the uppity Samoyed, or the haughty Tibetan Mastiff. You know, dogs that demand belly scratches at all hours of the night eat only organic chicken browned in a low-sodium broth, and when you toss them a tennis ball to fetch, they look at you like you just ripped out a fart. And then you have the mutts. Sloppy goofballs that wag their tails even when you are berating them for eating the drapes and are always up for a walk even in a torrential downpour. Mutts just want to hang with you and make you happy. Craig Johnson's mystery books about Walt Longmire, Sheriff of Absaroka County, Wyoming stand completely in the mutt category.

The Western Star is the 13th book in this series, and like a mutt, it doesn't strive for much—it is only too happy achieving some fun. Really, it don't need nothin' but a good time and how can we resist? It ain't looking for nothin' but a good time and seriously, it don't get better than this. Maybe it will bark at some squirrels, maybe it will give a harmless mail carrier the hairy eyeball, maybe it will just sit there and lick it's anus. *Hey*, it's all good as long as we're having a good time.

A skilled writer, Johnson can do fun. This time around we got Walt reminiscing about that time in the early '70's. You remember—finally back from the swampy jungles of 'Nam he was just starting out as a deputy sheriff to Lucian Connolly. He was on that train, *The Western Star*, with all those neighboring sheriffs for the

annual meeting of the Wyoming Sherriffs' Association when people started getting killed and thrown off the train. But who can you suspect when everyone is a sheriff?

We also flip periodically to the present day where a much older Longmire is in a lather about a mysterious convicted killer supposedly serving a life sentence getting a compassionate release from jail. Is this connected to the murders from the 1970's?

It's a pleasurable diversion—this mongrel really wants you to smile. The story moves at a rapid pace and there is a wonderfully creepy scene that takes place in the mental ward of a prison. The ultimate mystery however holds together as well as a subzero degree snowball (Note: scientifically during temperatures that drop below zero, it is too cold for snow to weld into a larger solid ball. Thus, my example indicates that the mystery doesn't hold together much at all.). The killer's motives are depressingly outdated and more than a little intolerant/unenlightened. The holes in the solution can be so big that you could probably drive the Western Star train through them, and the cliff hanger of an ending was surprisingly downbeat (though it sets up the next book in killer fashion). Still, all in all the book was an exciting and worthwhile read but not one of the stronger additions to the series.

Brenda says

In this 13th book in the Walt Longmire series, we get a glimpse of Walt's past and of his wife, Martha, with past and present colliding with disastrous results. In the present, Walt is in Cheyenne visiting his daughter and granddaughter, and also to attend a parole hearing for a convict who Walt does not want released. When the action moves into the past, we get the story of a train trip on The Western Star.

When Walt was a beginning deputy under Sheriff Lucian Connelly, he took part in this ceremonial trip which served as the annual meeting of the 24 sheriffs of Wyoming. One sheriff confides a suspicion to Walt simply because Walt had been in Vietnam and, therefore, uninvolved in what this sheriff believes is happening. How on earth does a murder occur on a moving train carrying 24 sheriffs, a deputy, train security, and support staff?

I always enjoy Craig Johnson's books, and this is no exception. Vic and Henry appear in this book and provide the wise-cracking conversations I've come to expect. It's an interesting addition to the series, but can be read without knowing the history of all the characters. This ends on what I'll call a lull; there is more to come in, hopefully, the next book.

Wart Hill says

Boy

Howdy

Fred Shaw says

The Western Star (Walt Longmire #13) This is an excellent series if you like current day tough Wyoming sheriffs. Anyone with a partner called "The Cheyenne Nation" has got to be a tough pair. Enjoy

Karen says

There are actually two stories (one from the past that eventually coincides with the present), but the reader is jostled a little by the back and forth momentum, IMO. And at the end, we are left with a huge problem that was somewhat neglected and we will have to wait to read the next book to continue the series.

The historical story about the Western Star, a legendary train famous in Wyoming history, is certainly worth learning about. This, along with interesting facts about the post-Vietnam era when Walt Longmire was undecided about the direction his life was going to take, gives us some background to learn about how he happened to take the deputy job under Lucian Connelly.

So, without giving away any spoilers, I would certainly recommend reading this book, because if you are a Longmire follower, you can't help yourself!

Scott says

**As I continue my Longmire series read, full disclosure requires that I openly admit I am a devoted fan of the Longmire television show (on A/E and now Netflix) and have enjoyed reading the previous books in the Longmire book series that inspired that show even more. With that said, I am still doing my best to provide objective and an honest review. **

"The Western Star" is the thirteenth book in the "Longmire" mystery series, continuing the fictional adventures of Walt Longmire, Sheriff of Absaroka County, Wyoming; his daughter, Cady, the world's greatest lawyer; his best friend, Henry Standing Bear; his loyal and outspoken deputy, Vic Moretti; his loyal and less outspoken deputy, and Dog, his faithful animal companion.

This time Johnson goes back to an approach he successfully used in the previous book, "Another Man's Moccasins". He breaks the plotline into two stories – one from Walt's past involving a murder investigation on the Western Star train during the annual Wyoming Sheriff's Association junket and one in the current day when Walt faces a parole hearing for one of the most dangerous men he has ever encountered during his career. Johnson once again moves smoothly back and forth between the present and the past to reveal key defining moments in Walt's career and personal life. We even get to see Martha, Walt's wife and true love, at one of the most sensitive and unsure times in her newly married life.

The story in the past shows Walt, as the new deputy, accompanying his boss and mentor, Sheriff Lucian Connelly to the annual Wyoming's Sheriff's Association junket held on the Western Star, a steam locomotive, traveling from Cheyenne to Evanston and back over several days. Leaving an angry and pregnant new wife, Walt finds himself facing the politics and conspiracies of twenty-four experienced sheriffs armed with only his trusty Colt .45 and a paperback copy of Agatha Christie's classic Murder on the Orient Express. It doesn't take long for Walt to rub some of them wrong, make some enemies, and find himself knocked out cold and thrown off the train. When he finds his way back (after meeting a famous singer who you can name for yourself), he finds himself in the middle of a murder investigation with 23

sheriffs and himself for suspects.

The story taking place in the present finds Walt attending a parole hearing that he has attended every four years for more than thirty years, to testify against the prisoner's release. Since it is in Cheyenne, Walt and his team of Lucian, Vic, and Henry stay with his daughter, Cady, and granddaughter, Lola, helping the two get settled in their new home and Cady's new job. The hearing carries a personal history for Walt who finds out that there is a change this time. The long-time prisoner is being set free by the governor's wife in an attempt to build good publicity for rising prison costs.

Johnson tells the two stories in a smooth flowing style and rhythm, drawing the reader in and grabbing their full attention. He moves from present to past and past to present with fluid ease, never missing a beat. Johnson is a confident author, master of his characters and canvas, bringing the two plotlines and mysteries together in a surprising and unbelievable climax that pays off in both rewarding and ultimately tragic ways. When you find out Walt's personal reason for not wanting the prisoner's release, it will emotionally haunt you for a long time.

Overall, "The Western Star" is one of my top two favorite Longmire books, along with Spirit of Steamboat because they made me laugh, cry, and cheer is absolute surprise during the reading. It is one of the best books I have read in a while and the quintessential "Longmire" story that not only pulled at my heart strings, but just ripped them right out. And about the cliffhanger at the end of this book. Yes, it was a mean thing to do, but with the build-up over the last several books of a certain enemy of Walt and his family, I am sure all will be forgiven when the next book, "The Depth of Winter" is released and the payoff is at hand.

Finishing this book brings to a close my reading and reviewing of the Longmire series – 13 novels, 2 novellas, and 1 book of short stories. I have not only enjoyed them, I have grown (very easily) to love each and every one of them. I can honestly say that this is one of the best series that I have ever read. Not just as a mystery series, but one of the best series of any kind.

In my opinion, Craig Johnson, has found a way to incorporate classic literature into modern day mysteries in a quintessential manner that only Robert B. Parker pulled off with his classic detective, Spenser. In addition, Johnson has molded a rich Wyoming landscape that lives and breathes and plays a critical part of his stories. But most important of all, he has established authentic heroes with real weaknesses and flaws who live within a moral code that many of us only dream of being able to pull off. Johnson has made me believe that Walt and his team of characters are real. And now they are part of my life forever. Thanks Craig!

Now I just have to wait six long months for "The Depth of Winter" to be published. That seems like such a long time without a "Longmire" fix...

Karl says

In conclusion, this will most likely be the last "Longmire" book that I will read and that goes for Craig Johnson as well. This book did me in regarding this series, and to tell you why would consist of giving too many spoilers, yes, plural, and I just don't want to do that.

Some supporting information regarding the book. The story consists of two time lines, one of which takes place in the 1970's and the second takes place currently. Jumping between timelines sometimes as much as

three or four times per chapter is poorly written and at times quite off putting and poorly executed..

In the 70's time line "Longmire" is recently out of the army and is hired by Lucian Connolly as a deputy sheriff. He has graduated college, and served two tours of duty in Vietnam along with his friend Henry Standing Bear. Longmire has also recently married. This would make him and his best friend Henry's age somewhere in their late twenties or early thirties.

This portion of the story takes place on what is perhaps the last and quite powerful steam engines still operating. This is also perhaps the third "Longmire" involving trains. Just sayin'. A murder occurs on the train, which is filled with all of the sheriff's in the state celebrating an annual get together by carousing and drinking copious amounts of liquor. When the train stops "Longmire" gets off the train and immediately gets hit in the head, suffers a concussion, and the train departs. With his head bleeding, a gaping open wound he stumbles into a nearby bar, seeks aid and a ride to the next town where the train will make a stop. The only ride available is a hippie bands' tour bus. It is implied that this is perhaps Jefferson Airplane's tour bus. During the ride of course a beautiful lady named "Grace" emerges from the rear of the bus and wants to do the nasty with Deputy Sheriff Longmire. Of course every woman he encounters wants his "input".

The other half of the story pertains to activities occurring in the present time. This would place Longmire and Henry's age into their mid to late seventies and Lucian's somewhere into his upper nineties. They perform stunts people of this age would be unable to perform.

At best all of the additional regular characters are less than cardboard cutouts.

So, that's it for me, however you may love this book.

Lesya says

Readers and fans of Craig Johnson's Longmire series - here's your warning. I started Johnson's *The Western Star* on my lunch hour one day. I read for half an hour, spent more than an hour talking to my mother that night, and, yet, I had to stay up and finish the book. Way too late. I had book hangover the next day. Darn you, Craig. In other words, *The Western Star* is a compelling story. It's a look back at a young Walt Longmire in a tribute to Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. But, don't worry. If you're familiar with the story, it doesn't have the expected ending. Instead, Johnson puts his own twist to the plot. Darn you, Craig Johnson.

There are two storylines. Longmire is in Cheyenne. Every four years he shows up for a parole hearing. He doesn't tell others why he's determined to keep the dangerous man behind bars. This time, there's powerful opposition. But, he also renews his weapons certification. Afterwards, a young sheriff asks about the picture on the wall. It's a picture from 1972, a group of lawmen in front of *The Western Star*, known as the sheriffs' train. There are twenty-five armed men in cowboy hats, twenty-four sheriffs and one deputy.

From 1948 to 1972, *The Western Star* made an annual trek, crossing the state with all Wyoming's sheriffs on board, the Wyoming Sheriffs' Association. The sheriffs can bring a guest, and Lucian Connolly, the sheriff of Absaroka County, brings his new deputy, a young Walt Longmire. Walt is back from Vietnam, married, and just before boarding he has a fight with his young wife, Martha. One of the sheriffs notices, and asks Walt to meet with him. He has suspicions that one or more of the sheriffs on the train have taken justice into their own hands. He can trust a stranger, a new deputy.

Intrigued? I can't reveal more about the book. I could tell you someone is killed. That death, the actions leading up to it, and the subsequent investigation haunt Longmire. He never tells his daughter, just as he never tells her why he wants the prisoner to remain in prison for his entire life. But, the storylines collide in an unexpected way, skillfully linked as only Craig Johnson can do.

The Western Star brings together so many of the traits that readers will recognize in Craig Johnson's writing. Just as in the early books, Martha haunts the story, even when she isn't present. Johnson introduces wonderful characters, but he brings back ones we're fond of. We get to see a much younger Walt, a younger Lucian Connolly. Henry Standing Horse was Longmire's best friend in 1972, as he is now. Vic is part of the current storyline, as is Walt's daughter and granddaughter.

Then there's Johnson's use of language and turn of phrase. Here's just one sentence from a scene in 1972 when Walt and Martha parted, and Henry drove off with her. "The Cheyenne Nation slipped the big bird down into gear, pulled through the open chain-link fence onto Front Street, and drove my heart away."

I could have given you a little more about the story. But, why? It's a riveting story with surprise twists. It's Craig Johnson's writing and characters. If it made me stay up to read it, I'm going to do the same to you. Read The Western Star and savor Walt's story, Johnson's writing. And, when you get to those last paragraphs, I'm going to bet you'll say, "Darn you, Craig Johnson."
