



**Title:** Badlands

**Author:** C.J. Box

**Description:**

Twelve-year-old Kyle Westergaard lives with his single mother in a small North Dakota town that was once just a stopover on the way to The Badlands but has recently boomed and become the heart of the Bakken Oil Field. Even though Kyle has been written off by everyone as "slow" and "learning disabled," he has dreams and deeper thoughts than anyone can imagine. He wants to get out of town, take care of his mother, and give them a better life. While delivering newspapers, he witnesses a car accident where a mysterious bundle flies out and he thinks his fortunes might have changed. The bundle is filled with money and packets of white powder. His mother's boyfriend, T-Lock, tells him it is worth hundreds of thousands and Kyle shouldn't tell anyone. He, T-Lock, will handle it for all of them.

Cassie Dewell (*The Highway*) is the new deputy sheriff in town and the only female in the department. In this newly rich town where men outnumber women twenty-to-one, the police need all the help they can get. With oil comes money. With money comes drugs. With drugs comes violent gangs wanting to corner the market and infiltrate the cops.

When the temperature drops to 30 below and a gang war heats up, Cassie realizes she may be in over her head. She becomes the target of someone who is leaving body parts where she is most likely to find them. As she is propelled on a collision course with a murderous enemy, she finds that the key to it all might come in the most unlikely form: an undersized twelve-year-old boy on a bike who keeps showing up where he doesn't belong.

*Badlands* is a masterpiece of suspense, detailing family dynamics and small-town politics in a time and place like no other.

**Reviews**

**Booklist** (starred review):

This could be the most effective of his thrillers since his Edgar-winning *Blue Heaven* (2008). The temperature on the northern plains may fall to 40 below, but the engine of this thriller races red hot, providing plenty of warmth to keep readers going all night.

**Library Journal** (starred review):

Fracking brings new energy to the surface, and Box does the same with another intriguing character whom Joe Pickett fans will want to know better. Suspensefully you can't put it down.

**Publishers Weekly** (starred review):

Edgar-winner Box's superior thriller carries some characters and themes over from his two previous standalones, *The Highway* and *Back of Beyond*, as investigator Cassie Dewell

relocates to North Dakotas boomtown oil fields. Cassie arrives just as a series of brutal murders signals a war between drug gangs although the missing duffle bag the criminals are searching for has accidentally wound up in the hands of a special-needs paperboy, 12-year-old Kyle Westergaard. Kyle just wants a stable home life, but his possession of the bag full of drugs and money sets off more violent deaths. The vulnerable boys plight gives emotional heft to the criminal investigation, balancing cynicism with warm empathy.

### ***Kirkus***

A suspenseful, professional-grade north country procedural whose heroine, a deft mix of compassion and attitude, would be welcome to return and tie up the gaping loose end Box leaves. The unrelenting cold makes this the perfect beach read.

### **[The Washington Times](#)**

Taking another break from his best-selling series about Wyoming game warden Joe Pickett, Box delivers an enthralling thriller in *Badlands*, the story of a once-quiet area unprepared for its rapid growth. Box deftly shows an area under siege by progress, where the prairie now roared with trains and tankers. The authors strength in creating well-rounded characters shaped by their environs and their own moral codes again shines in *Badlands*.

### **[The Minneapolis Star Tribune](#)**

Box is known for writing wilderness noir, dark suspenseful stories set in the wilds of Montana and Wyoming, his landscapes as strong and compelling as his characters. In this absorbing new novel, North Dakotas dark prairie with its pipeline fields, heavy equipment yards, tool companies and its man camps is balanced with aplomb against the story of a boy and his quest for respite from one trauma after another.

### **[The Denver Post](#)**

Box is a master of using issues between the old and the new west as themes in his novels. In *Badlands*, Box takes a small town just east of the border of Montana and chillingly depicts how the current oil boom parallels the gold rush days of the 1800s. The characters in "*Badlands*" are finely drawn and display interesting layers to their personalities. Even the bad guys doing ruthless and horrible things are made fascinating, and there are several characters that beg to be brought back for the next adventure.

### **[The Toronto Star](#)**

C. J. Box, the crime fiction bard of Americans northern plain states, sets his latest book in the chaos of North Dakotas new oil prosperity. The book, in Boxs trademark rough and ready prose, deals with the sleuthing out of one corrupting drug ring by the sharp-tongued but likeable Sheriffs Investigator Cassie Dewell. She benefits unexpectedly from the aid of a gallant 12-year-old boy who suffers from fetal alcohol syndrome. Only in C. J. Boxs North Dakota.

### **[The Providence Journal](#)**

Boxs richly atmospheric settings mirror the frigid hearts of characters in an ice-encrusted setting where the human soul seems equally as desolate. Not so for Cassie Dewell, who stands as the lone ray of light amid the descending darkness in this pitch-perfect, beautifully constructed and conceived thriller.

### **[Bookmunch](#)**

Its as snappy as an Elmore Leonard and propulsive in the way that all crime novels (the good and the bad) try to be. What sets Box apart and this is as true of *Badlands* as it

is of any of his books is that, in addition to set pieces that snap and fizz like electricity (Badlands is full of such scenes, from an early interrogation through to the bloody climactic resolution), there are moments of quiet reflection, ordinary life intrudes (as ordinary life is prone to) and characters are rarely cyphers, there to shift the plot along. If one of the definitions of good writing was that characters determine plot and not vice versa, Box continues to demonstrate that you can write popular fiction that is both intelligent and compelling, without giving too much away to shallow spectacle.

### ***The Record Searchlight***

Here, dusty, windblown, winter-cold North Dakota becomes almost a character and surely the states publicity staff has ripped up all the copies of Badlands they can find. But its the human characters one small boy who will grip a readers heart at the beginning and not let go until the last page, as well as a bunch of crooks dealing drugs and the harried police trying to do their best in an unfriendly environment that make this worth reading.

### ***The Alabama Liberal***

Like all the best crime plots, this one centers more on a taste for regional flavor and bone-deep characterizations than mere structural mechanics, and Boxs depiction of this changing town is more Grapes of Wrath than James Patterson.