



**Title:** Below Zero

**Author:** C.J. Box

**Description:**

*Below Zero* begins with an unassuming phone message: "Tell Sherry April called." But Sherry -- Joe Pickett's oldest daughter, Sheridan and the Pickett family are shaken to the core. April, Pickett's foster daughter, was killed in a horrific murder and arson spree six years prior. To Joe, it doesn't seem even remotely possible that April could have survived the massacre described in *Winterkill*. He was there. But Sherry starts to believe there's a chance that April is still alive; the girl on the other end of the phone is able to recall family incidents that only April could know.

Joe, however, remains suspicious, especially when he discovers that the calls have been placed from locations where serious crimes have occurred.

At the same time, an older man and a much younger girl cross the country. The man is on a mission to repent for the crimes he's committed against the environment during his lifetime. He ultimately wants to offset each incident until he not only becomes carbon neutral, but actually drops below zero as if he's never existed. As the path of these travelers starts to intersect with the Pickett family's, the question is raised: Is this young girl April -- or are Joe and his family the victims of the cruelest of hoaxes

**Reviews**

***Publishers Weekly* (starred review):**

Powered by provocative themes of environmental activism, this relentlessly paced powder keg of a thriller could be Box's best to date.

***Library Journal* (starred review):**

Wyoming's immense spaces make a fitting background for another tense thriller, with the iconic Devils Tower holding court over a frantic chase through the tangled back roads of the Black Hills. Box's series is the gold standard in the western mystery subgenre (*Blood Trail*), and his latest is just as addictive as the others.

***Booklist*:**

Box returns with a Pickett adventure that marries the fast pace and ensemble approach of the stand-alones (*Blue Heaven* and *Three Weeks to Say Goodbye*) with the thematic concerns and reliable cast of the series. It starts when the Wyoming game warden's teenage daughter, Sheridan, receives a text message with a staggering implication: that April, the foster daughter thought dead in *Winterkill* (2003), is still alive. If it really is April who's texting, she's in danger, and for Pickett, the only thing worse than losing her the first time would be losing her again.

Pickett must negotiate FBI politics, recruit his fugitive friend Nate Romanowski, and take a crash course in cell-phone-tracking technology to find her. The environmental theme, always part of a Pickett novel, is global warming, and Box gets at it in a surprising way (the title doesn't mean what you think it means)...The book is a

successful blend of the two things Box does best and seems likely to bring fans of the terrific stand-alone *Blue Heaven* (2008) to this very fine series.

**The Associated Press:**

Wyoming game Warden Joe Pickett isn't the most heroic crime novel hero around, but he might be the most decent. In *Below Zero*, the ninth novel in the series, his best qualities are on full display: devoted family man, faithful public servant, loyal friend and lover of nature.

The book is tightly written, with well-drawn characters and sharp dialogue. Box keeps the reader off balance with a series of plot twists as startling as anything on TV's "24." You never see them coming, yet they never feel contrived.

**The Denver Post:**

Box has crafted a story that is as current as environmental terrorism and as old as a father's love for his child. He then sets the story in his beloved, well-described Wyoming and even takes Joe to the big city of Chicago by way of Devil's Tower. The action is brutal and unforgiving as the two pairs of father and child struggle toward their goals.

*Below Zero* is more of a thriller than a mystery, and the pace is relentless. The characters are fascinating, and their actions range from the heroic to despicable.

Box really knows how to create a complex situation, add suspense and then twist the tale with surprises that make for an intense and satisfying read.

**Barnesandnoble.com (review spotlight for June 22, 2009):**

Beautifully written and constructed, with an art that underplays its excitement and emotional strength... *Below Zero*, the ninth Pickett book, could be the best one yet.

**Billings Gazette:**

Wyoming author C.J. Box had me hooked with the opening lines of *Open Season*, the first of his mysteries featuring game warden Joe Pickett.

The author's skill at plotting, suspense and character were evident quickly in that first novel and have been honed over the years, with more Pickett books and the standalone novels *Three Weeks To Say Goodbye* and *Blue Heaven*.

And Box's writing is razor-sharp in his ninth Pickett mystery, *Below Zero*. Box adeptly weaves three plot lines together in a fast-paced hunt across northeastern Wyoming.

The Chicago mob, a dying man's quest to erase his carbon footprint, a fugitive falconer and Pickett's gold-digger mother-in-law seem an odd mix. But Box writes with the tightness and descriptive abilities of a former journalist.

Unpredictable and thought-provoking, this is the best Pickett novel yet and displays the rich fusion of message and entertaining mystery found in *Free Fire*, which was set in Yellowstone National Park.

*Below Zero* is a standout mystery showing why Box has built a national and international fan base.