



## **Black Hills**

*Nora Roberts*

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A summer at his grandparents' South Dakota ranch is not eleven-year-old Cooper Sullivan's idea of a good time. But things are a bit more bearable now that he's discovered the neighbor girl, Lil Chance, and her homemade batting cage. Even horseback riding isn't as awful as Coop thought it would be. Each year, with Coop's annual summer visit, their friendship deepens from innocent games to stolen kisses, but there is one shared experience that will forever haunt them: the terrifying discovery of a hiker's body.

As the seasons change and the years roll, Lil stays steadfast to her aspiration of becoming a wildlife biologist and protecting her family land, while Coop struggles with his father's demand that he attend law school and join the family firm. Twelve years after they last walked together hand in hand, fate has brought them back to the Black Hills when the people and things they hold most dear need them most.

Coop recently left his fast-paced life as an investigator in New York to take care for his aging grandparents and the ranch he has come to call home. Though the memory of his touch still haunts her, Lil has let nothing stop her dream of opening the Chance Wildlife Refuge, but something ... or someone ... has been keeping a close watch. When small pranks and acts of destruction escalate into the heartless killing of Lil's beloved cougar, recollections of an unsolved murder in these very hills have Coop springing to action to keep Lil safe.

Lil and Coop both know the natural dangers that lurk in the wild landscape of the Black Hills. Now they must work together to unearth a killer of twisted and unnatural instincts who has singled them out as prey.

## **Black Hills Details**

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Author : Nora Roberts

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## From Reader Review Black Hills for online ebook

### Liriom says

Un relato fresco, dinamico y romantico. En un ambiente espectacular, en plena naturaleza, ranchos, granjas y caballos se enmarca una historia de suspense/romance con sus tira y afloja llevada con gran acierto. Muy entretenida, de las que no puedes parar hasta acabarla.

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### Annie says

#### **One Sentence Summary:**

*Can Dr Lillian Chance and ex-cop Cooper Sullivan outwit a crazed serial killer to save Lil's Wildlife Refuge and reignite the passionate flame of first love?*

#### **Favourite Quote:**

*"Loving you made a man out of me," he said when he let her go. "It's the man who came back for you."*  
(Page 374)

#### **My Review:**

Being an Aussie who lives half an hour from the beach and has ridden a horse only once in her lifetime; I loved this Nora Roberts novel! There is just something about the American Wilderness - so different to the Aussie outback or rainforest - that I found so appealing. Combined with the wildlife refuge element and all the talk about big cats and I was sucked in. I fell in love with the setting and premise of this novel before I fell in love with the characters (although that didn't take long either!) I wanted to book a plane ticket so I could see the South Dakota night sky for real.

Although I've read a couple of other reviews who haven't favoured the characters of this book, I have to tell you honestly that I really loved the main characters and their chemistry. Cooper's a typical bossy alpha male (no complaints here) and Lil is an intelligent, likeable female lead who gives just as good as she gets. Surprisingly, even the jilted childhood sweethearts storyline worked for me and the suspense element really heightens the romantic tension.

The suspense element of this novel wasn't nightmare-inducing however it certainly was enough to keep me flipping pages quickly. I tend to think of Nora Roberts romantic suspense as crime novels for chickens (like me). If it weren't for the absolute guarantee that both the hero and the heroine are going to live and have their happily ever after, I don't think my poor nerves could cope with the serial killers and other assorted nasties she writes about. So if you're a seasoned suspense reader you may not be phased by this part of the plot; if you're like me, you may find yourself biting your nails on more than one occasion.

Apart from wanting to read the talked-about wedding, I really can't think of anything I'd like to change about this book. I loved it from start to finish - it was just what I needed. Fans of Angel's Falls and Nora Roberts's other romantic suspense novels will enjoy this read!

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### **Anna Casanovas says**

Elegí esta novela de Nora Roberts por recomendación de una lectora y amiga de las RS y ha resultado ser un acierto. "Colinas negras" es una estupenda "novela de verano" (me estoy planteando escribir un post sobre este tema, "novelas de verano") en el sentido de que es ágil, trepidante y consigue que te quedes enganchada a sus páginas. No resumiré la historia, solo diré que parte de una premisa básica del género; el primer amor que acaba porque uno de los dos (el héroe) se sacrifica para que el otro (la protagonista) consiga sus sueños profesionales y vuelven a coincidir al cabo de unos años. En este caso, la señora Roberts, maestra del género, sitúa la historia en las montañas de Estados Unidos con un trasfondo vinculado a los descendientes de los indios y a los animales salvajes. El misterio es relativamente previsible, igual que lo es el final feliz de la pareja, pero eso no le quita intriga ni emoción. Cooper es un muy buen protagonista masculino, quizás he echado en falta conocer más detalles sobre los años que pasa separado de Lillian, pero es convincente, coherente y romántico. En el caso de Lillian, debo confesar que en algunos momentos no he coincidido con ella, aunque he logrado entenderla.

"Colinas negras" es una novela muy sólida, cuenta con un argumento sin fisuras y su pareja protagonista está muy bien construida. En mi caso, probablemente la novela me habría gustado más si la historia de amor hubiese tenido más dramatismo (un final un poco más largo, quizás), pero me ha emocionado y recomiendo su lectura sin dudarlo a cualquier amante de la literatura romántica contemporánea y también a todos los lectores de novelas de intriga.

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### **Lindig says**

I liked:

The setting (South Dakota), the information (endangered animals, especially big cats), most of the characters (but not the hero).

I didn't like:

The plot (psychopathic killer stalks our heroine; shades of Montana Sky), the hero (my way or else, my way or else, my way or else; if that's his idea of love, no thanks), the heroine (for letting him have his way).

Roberts does her usual trademark workmanlike stuff, so the book is readable. However, the "love" story kept pissing me off so much that the suspense was diluted. And the secondary "love" story, while meant to be interesting for its socially progressive messages, was both skimmed over and almost undermined because of the man's attitude of sureness that he wanted this and so it would be.

I'm trying not to add spoilers but I didn't find much in this novel that would be surprising to anyone. I've always liked Roberts for the humor her characters displayed. I've been known to laugh out loud. But not this time. As I said, workmanlike, but certainly not one of her best. Overall, a disappointment.

Update June 2011: having forgotten I'd read it before, I tried to read it again. This time, I disliked it so much I put it down about a third of the way through and said, "ick." Changed the stars to two. Thinking about rating it one star. One of NR's biggest disappointments so far.

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## **Gabyal says**

Colinas negras es una estupenda novela, es ágil, trepidante y consigue que te quedes enganchada a sus páginas. La historia surge en las montañas de Estados Unidos con un trasfondo vinculado a los descendientes de los indios y al amor de la prota por los animales salvajes. Un relato fresco, dinámico y romántico, en un ambiente espectacular, en plena naturaleza, ranchos, granjas, animales salvajes y caballos se enmarca una historia de suspenso/romance con sus tira y afloja llevada con gran acierto. Me ha gustado bastante el libro :)

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## **Heather Blair says**

I'd a little less patience for Cooper this time around and his heavy handed ways. But, it's still a kick-ass book, set in one of my favorite places in the world with an awesome heroine written by one of the coolest and most talented authors to ever put pen to page.

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## **Sheila says**

Let me say up front that I had especially high standards for this book. I'm from the Black Hills: I was born in Deadwood, graduated high school in Rapid City, and went to grad school in Spearfish, the three towns she names in the book. I also have a decent amount of knowledge about the Lakota history and relationship with the Hills.

Maybe if this plot was used in a setting/culture I was unfamiliar with, I would have liked it, but I really, really didn't. There were little mistakes (a "beef farmer" = a "rancher," dude), wacky geography, and clunky exposition (there was an infodump about the Sioux Black Hills lawsuit/settlement that made me grind my teeth, it had so little place in the scene).

But the thing that really bothers me is this: the villain has bought into every stupid stereotype about Native Americans Roberts could think of. She attempted to balance that with some exposition from other characters about why he was wrong, but see above about clunky exposition. It really didn't work for me. I'm super extra sensitive about this, and it made me nuts.

Also, there were three Native American characters in the entire book, and not a one of them had both Lakota parents. Not one.

The plot itself was okay but not great; the two romance storylines were all about the guys pursuing women who told them no, which I'm also not fond of.

And did I mention? A beef farmer is a RANCHER. wtf.

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## **Claire - The Coffeeholic Bookworm says**

The story is set in a wildlife refuge in the Black Hills of South Dakota, hence the title. Lil Chance met brooding city boy named Cooper Sullivan, who clearly had family issues but won't admit it. Soon they

became close with each other and remain friends until their adolescent years.

But in their case, absence didn't make the heart grow fonder. Because during the times that they didn't see each other, their feelings had grown apart and the long distance had deviated their attention... well, mostly in Cooper's case actually.

One day, when Cooper decided to go back to the ranch after something terrible happened while he was on duty as a cop. His feelings towards Lil changed. But a psychopathic killer was on the loose and had been stalking Lil. She and Cooper teamed up to discover the truth behind the mystery surrounding Black Hills.

To tell you the truth, I've been reading a number of YA/Fantasies/Paranormals lately and most of them are about shapeshifters. Thankfully, this book, Black Hills isn't one of them, even if there are cougars and wolves present in the story. Black Hills is actually a suspense mystery that is very much a staple on Nora Roberts' books.

As expected, Nora Roberts writes with passion and her characters really pull you into the story. Cooper and Lilian found themselves embroiled in a romance that needed to be nurtured. The mystery part of the story is awesome, although the main characters were a little complicated, in my opinion. I would have given this a 5star rating, but something held me back – maybe because I see some Montana Sky anecdotes in the story, specifically on the animal protection part. Nevertheless, Nora Roberts still is one of my favorite authors ever!

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### **Carmaletta Hilton says**

The only reason I finished this book was because I wanted to see how the end scene played out. I assumed that the bad guy would kidnap her and I wanted to see what happened there. Honestly, the only good thing I can say about this book was that it was pretty cool the way Baby came to the rescue.

The rest of this book was just not fun for me. I couldn't fully get behind Lil's refuge because while I understand some of the animals there, I don't really agree with taking an animal out of its natural habitat because it got old. The majority of the story felt like the refuge and, after a while, I just didn't care to hear anymore.

I liked Lil and Coop a lot more as children than adults, and even as children, Lil's "This place is SO much better than the city even though I've never been to the city" got on my nerves. As adults, I found Coop to be bossy, controlling, and selfish. I found Lil to be annoying in how she kept swearing that Coop broke her heart 11 years ago and she still can't get over it.

Basically, this book has left me wondering if I'll ever read another romance novel again. It seems as though the trend is to have this boorish men who only care about what they want, and their feelings. Coop flat out said that he didn't care what she wanted or thought, he wanted her and she would just have to come around. The same thing happened with Farley and Tansy. This is excused away by saying that the women had feelings for the men, too, but they had to be convinced that it was okay. It bothered me that these women were basically stalked and I'm supposed to think that this is romantic. The way Farley told Tansy that they were going to get married really bugged me. As did Coop's decision that the relationship was too hard back then, but now it's easier since he moved back, so now they'll be together. I find relationships more romantic and appealing when they are equal partners. Coop cared nothing at all about Lil's feelings when they broke up or when he decided they were going to hook back up. Tansy's fears regarding a relationship with Farley

were just blown off as being silly.

So, no, I didn't like this book at all. The ending was okay, but overall, I had to force myself to read it and I basically skimmed the last half of the book just to get it finished.

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### **Melissa says**

I thought this book was great.

Predominately a romance novel, Lil and Cooper are introduced as children, and fall in love as young adults. Driven away from each other, they lead separate lives until a serial killer brings them back together.

The romance between them is lovely, and there are great moments of suspense and mystery, but I guess like any good Nora Roberts book, it's all about the love..

A few things made this a 4 and not 5 star book for me. It was just a little too drawn out. Most of the book was just waiting for them to get together, which you (and they) knew was going to happen. I know that's what romance books do... But the tension kinda floated away when they acknowledged their feelings towards each other. Then nothing happens. It was very anticlimactic in that way, a lot of it was unnecessary. I did like the history of the relationship though, from hanging out together as children, to young adults, to finally seeing each other again 12 years after they separated.

We find out quite early in the book who the killer is, and I think it took away the majority of the suspense. For me I love a good suspense book with a surprise twist. Something that keeps you guessing. Who could it be? Is it this person? Was it that person? There was none of this after the first half of the book, and after you find out who it is, you feel totally underwhelmed. However I felt this was saved by the ending suspense scenes, where it became quite enjoyable again.

I loved the wildlife reserve setting, loved the big cats. I thought this was an awesome aspect of the book.

The secondary love story I found a bit bland, but I love that Nora loves the love!! It just took up a chunk of space that I felt could have been completely cut out, and saved me precious reading time.

However, even though these criticisms may seems quite large, as I was reading it I didn't think so at all. I really enjoyed this book overall.

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### **Tracy says**

#### **~\* 3.5 Stars \*~**

For years I've read Nora Roberts books, always considering myself a huge fan. Whether contemporary romance, paranormal romance, or romantic suspense...whether stand alone books or trilogies or short series...I've always counted on Roberts for a sweeping romantic read that satisfies as it entertains, and for years she's delivered. Some books, of course, I've liked more than others. Some series or trilogies have hit closer to home than others. Some characters I've liked more than others. That's to be expected, I suppose, when you favor an author that produces such a wide range and so many opportunities to read.

And saying that, I can honestly admit I enjoyed Black Hills. It wasn't my favorite effort, but I did enjoy it. The story of Lil and Cooper, two people who have loved each other their whole lives, who knew the love of best friends as children, the world-ending romance of young love, and the sometimes too realistic love of adults, was definitely comprehensive and at turns sweet, romantic, and sensual. Their characters were palatable enough, though I always felt that Lil had a bit more life in her than Coop did, and I very much enjoyed her profession and her passion for it. The surrounding threat of a serial killer loose in the Black Hills of South Dakota was reasonably represented and blended well with the romantic narrative, as do most of Roberts' efforts in this sub-genre. And yet...

Without a doubt, Nora Roberts has written some of the best romantic suspense out there. Montana Sky was a personal favorite of mine, as was River's End and Carolina Moon, and those are just off the top of my head. In those books, and others that I have read of Roberts, the characters and the tension in the story combined with the romance to bring me into the book with almost lyrical effortlessness, until I cared beyond reason for the lives of the characters and their love and safety. I can't say that Black Hills evoked that same sort of passion in me, and that's a true shame.

Like I said, I liked the characters - Roberts is excellent at filling her book with both lead characters and secondary and ancillary characters that could be neighbors, relatives, friends, they're so often recognizable. So comfortable. But for some reason, Black Hills didn't connect me to them as other books of hers have done, so I never quite reached that reading nirvana of feeling like I'd stepped into the book and had it surround me, capture me, and force me into experiencing it on a visceral level. And I can't say I'm sure why it didn't happen here.

Maybe it was the writing style. The flow of the narrative struck me as odd through most of the book...there was a very artistic structure even to the dialogue that read more like a painting of words to stand back and admire aesthetically than a flowing, living story that sucked me in. Several important scenes in Black Hills, scenes that would have given a reader a much more personal experience with these characters, were sort of glossed over or mentioned in a past tense...like the big scene between Lil and Coop that split them up for almost twelve years. Or the scene in New York that closed the door on Cooper's career on the police force. Or Lil's breakup with Jean-Paul. The way this story unfolded, with significant scenes happening outside of the reader's awareness and having them told instead of experienced, I think, hindered the intimacy between character and reader and kept that relationship at a far more superficial level than I'm used to in Nora Roberts's books. At least...I think that's part of the reason.

I also never quite got any sense that I was able to feel what Lil and Cooper were feeling for each other, and Cooper in particular was a far more stoic character than I prefer. The words for his love for Lil were their...eventually...but by then he'd put off such a phlegmatic air that I had a hard time pinning him down. He seemed rather joyless, even proclaiming his love. Dedicated, yes. Unwavering, yes. Determined, yes. Happy about it? Not really. That didn't connect well with me. In that regard, the simple joy between Tansy and Farley in their relationship was more appealing to me as a reader.

I liked the story. I'm still a fan of Roberts. And I'm not one of the many critics who think she's jumped the shark as an author and is now just regurgitating romances and scenes and dialogue with each "new" book. There were parts of this story and characters in it that I felt worked very well. But I've seen her do better. And I was hoping that Black Hills was one of the better ones. It just...wasn't. Not quite.

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Reviewed for One Good Book Deserves Another.

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### **Books.Paper.Mania says**

One of the cheesiest novels I've read. Seriously, the plot was somehow boring, characters were very shallow, & there was a lot of exaggeration. I just couldn't relate all the action to the main point of this novel.

It's about South Dakota Biologist Lilian Chance & her wildlife habitat which she had built at her home. Comes Coop, her life sweetheart who dumped her when they were in college & returned back to help his injured grandfather to take care of his business & farm. & so they meet & remember the good old days. Will they hook up again?! That's for you to know . . . or I'll just say it coz it's so obvious. Yes they do.

That's not the whole story. There's a mad man out there, running after people & hunting them down around Lil's habitat just because he likes it. He threatens Lil that he will be coming after bla bla bla just because she's caging animals & not giving them their freedom.

It would have been better if it didn't have all the silly parts of Coop & Lil trying to come back to each other or Tansey not wanting to get engaged to Farley because he's younger & she's black \*blekh\*. So many useless details that didn't help forming the plot at all. My last book for Nora Roberts (it's my 2nd one btw).

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### **Sierra says**

I loved Lil and Coop together. They were adorable together. Farley and Tansy were also adorable together. I may have shed a few tears when Farley had gone outside when they were going to start making plans for a house then Jenna followed him out, and he called her Ma. Baby was my favorite of all the animals especially since he had followed Lil and he was her favorite also.

Lil and Coop's relationship showed that you never get over your first love. It also showed that there are always obstacles when it comes to the people you love. When it comes to the people you love you will do whatever you can to keep them safe.

One quote that I liked :

“Do you know how many ways love can hit you? So it makes you happy, or miserable? It makes you sick in the belly or hurt in the heart. It makes everything brighter and sharper, or it blurs all the edges. It makes you feel like a king or a fool. Every way love can hit you, it's hit me when it comes to you”

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### **Miss Kim says**

It was a little difficult to decide on a star rating for Nora's latest. The beginning was great, the middle lulled, and then the end was good. I waffled between 3 1/2 and 4 and decided-what the heck, go for four.

Lil and Coop became close as children when he would spend summers at his grandparents' home in South Dakota. He was a city boy that had never seen the country. Lil, a Sioux descendant, was raised there with her sort of hippie-like parents. Lil is fascinated by wild animals, particularly the cougar.

They fall in love in their teens; however, they have separate goals and are inevitably separated. Lil wants to open a wildlife refuge on her parents' land, and Coop is defying his father by not going to law school and

joining the police academy. On one of their last few days together, they are in the woods and stumble upon a crime scene.

Twelve years later, Lil has opened her refuge. She's just come home from a six month trip in South America, and she discovers Coop is back in town for good. She has mixed feelings about it, because she feels he broke her heart years ago. She was willing to do anything to keep their relationship, but he was insistent they separate. While the two are getting reacquainted, a psycho appears. Someone is terrorizing Lil and her refuge.

I liked Coop a lot, and it didn't hurt that he was a cop—my favorite type of hero. He was of course gorgeous, patient, and determined to protect Lil and to keep her forever. Lil was very reluctant to let him back in after she was hurt. She's a tough girl, however didn't cross to line to being a ball buster. I can't stand that type of heroine.

There is a secondary romance that is really sweet, and I wish the author had spent more time on them. For those that are interested in interracial romance, you'd like this one. The couple is BWWM. The hot cowboy pursues this few years older woman and romances her to pieces.

I recommend to fans of Nora, and those that like light romantic suspense.

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### **jenjn79 says**

Solid 4-stars, maybe bordering on 4.5. This was just an all around solid book for me. There were two things that kept it from being a 5-star read, and neither of those were critical issues. But overall, I have to say I enjoyed this book a lot (and I'm trying not to be a biased Nora Roberts groupie when I say that).

Cooper Sullivan was just eleven years old when his parents sent him off to his grandparents farm in the Black Hills of South Dakota for the summer. For Coop, it was like being sent to prison and he hated it. But a talk with his grandmother convinces him to give it a chance so he does and befriends nine-year-old Lil Chance in the process. Over the years their friendship grows until, in their late teens, it becomes more. Lil thinks they are starting their future together, but after a while it all falls apart and they go their separate ways.

Now twelve years have passed. Lil has fulfilled her lifelong dream of opening a wildlife refuge and everything is going well for her. Then Coop, a retired detective, returns, this time for good. Coop broke her heart once and Lil is determined to not let him do it again. For Coop, seeing Lil is a painful reminder of the hardships of his life. The two come to an unintentional truce of leaving each other alone. But then danger threatens Lil. Someone is messing with her Refuge, pulling "pranks" and then killing a cougar.

Coop can't sit by while Lil is in danger, especially when it becomes clear that Lil is in real danger. He also realizes that it's time to clear things up between them personally. He loves her, always has, but now he has to regain her trust. And hope to keep her safe from a madman who loves the thrill of the hunt.

I've read quite a few comments already about hot the animal/nature aspect of the book didn't do anything for the reader...but for me, I loved that part of the story. Of course, I love nature and animals and all that. So it was interesting to read about the Refuge, how things worked, the animals, etc. And I loved the bond between Lil and Baby the cougar. So sweet. Especially how the ending worked out. Realistic? Probably not! But very

interesting to read and a great way to resolve the suspense part of the story. All in all, this part of the story just worked for me.

I also liked how the beginning of the book was done. The story goes back to when Coop and Lil are kids and meet for the first time and progresses through some key scenes. Roberts has done "time progression" stories before (and I've always loved them), but this one is not quite as involved. The "flashback" part is only about 80 pages. So the past doesn't overwhelm the story. But I thought those first 80 pages were nice to read; gives you some great insight into the characters and the bond between them.

As for the relationship between Lil and Coop...I liked it, but I can't say I loved it. There was definitely chemistry between them and a strong bond, but there was something just a little bit off and I can't put my finger on it. The two were enjoyable to read overall, though. There were some really sweet scenes and I liked how Coop worked to show here he was back for good and that she could trust him.

There's also a secondary romance between Farley and Tansy. Enjoyable to read. Farley was a cool character. Very "aww schucks!" And Tansy was like his polar opposite. So their romance was interesting.

I have two somewhat minor complaints about the book:

First, the identity of the bad guy is reveals fairly early in the book and I found that rather annoying. It deadened the suspense angle somewhat and made things a bit less intense. It didn't really make sense to me why Roberts just flat out gave away the identity. I would have rather there been more of a guessing game, more trying to figure out who was trying to hurt Lil. So that took away a little bit from the book, for me.

And secondly - and this is may be more personal preference than anything else - I would have liked it if Coop had had to face his family issues within the present part of the story. There's some reference to Coop "coming to peace," so to speak, with the way things were, but to me, things between Coop and his parents felt rather unsettled. And because Coop's family dynamics played a role in what happened between him and Lil, it took a little away from their relationship (that unsettled feeling between Coop and his parents). So yeah, I wouldn't have minded something happening on that front.

Overall, though, this was a solid book from Roberts. I'm not sure it would qualify in my top ten of favorites, but it's definitely a book I wouldn't mind reading again in a year or so. It was fun to read, very nature-centered, with a nice romance, and a pretty good suspense angle.

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