FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ GENERAL FICTION

Jade Beach: Mystic Adventures in Big Sur

J.W. Winslow
Fresh Art (Mar 15, 2013)
Unknown $24.95 (340pp)
978-0-9658182-3-0

Set in northern California, J.W. Winslow's *Jade Beach: Mystic Adventures in Big Sur* tells the tale of a woman whose miraculous return from the grave catches the attention of the paparazzi and puts her in the thick of a vicious legal battle for her estate.

Dyanna Falconer is a playwright/painter whose engagement to billionaire Kevin Stone ends with his abrupt death in a freak helicopter accident. After falling over a cliff and breaking her back and neck in several places, she is rescued by a group of Esalen Indians who recognize her as a "Warrior Goddess" and restore her to health so that she can fulfill her ultimate purpose of saving their land. At times, Dyanna is cold and heartless, as when she abandons her cancer-ridden cousin, Louise, for an impromptu vacation to Paris, or when she begins to date Louise's ex-boyfriend but can't understand why Louise gets so upset. At other times, she is a pampered rich woman who lets her servants and lawyers plan her life for her. Throughout, Dyanna is a woman who appreciates good food, expensive clothes, and beautiful flowers.

With more than five dozen characters in all (two dozen introduced in the first two chapters alone) and very few of them making more than one appearance, it is nearly impossible to keep track of many of the people who populate the story.

The author is skilled at introducing mini-mysteries for the reader to solve, but fails to resolve them. For example, Winslow references the "Jasmine Dogs" as the cause of Dyanna's accident, but by the end of the book, readers who didn't read the first novel still won't know who they are. The "dogs" could be canines, a weather phenomenon, or a gang. Similarly mysterious, there are no explanations about what makes the Phelps children "wicked," even though they seem to have driven their mother to madness. Furthermore, according to its subtitle, this novel is supposed to be about "mystic adventures in Big Sur," even invoking Esalen Indian beliefs that Dyanna is a Warrior Goddess. But there are no supernatural events or superstitious beliefs to warrant a mystical label. Finally, the reader is left wondering about the legal battle for Dyanna's estate, especially since she seems like she's abandoning it. While it is possible that the author is saving some explanations for the final book in this series, the lack of conflict and suspense in *Jade Beach* makes it a slow read, especially since any problem that befalls Dyanna is quickly solved by a gourmet meal, a therapeutic massage, or a fragranced bath.

Foodies will appreciate this book because each chapter describes, in thorough detail, complete gourmet meals. Anyone interested in the Big Sur area will find that its references to the climate and surrounding areas add authenticity to this tale.

EMILY ASAD (December 20, 2012)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Review make no guarantee that the author will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.