

★ **Nazaré**

JJ Amaworo Wilson

PM Press (Nov 9, 2021)

Hardcover \$29.95 (320pp)

978-1-62963-920-8

In JJ Amaworo Wilson's vibrant novel *Nazaré*, a tyrannical regime meets its match in a compassionate teenager who seems to command the waves.

For four generations, the vicious men of the Matanza family have ruled Balaal, sowing fear to maintain control. In the fishing village where Kin grows up, people choose docility over defiance, kept in line by the memories of failed rebellions and nights of terror and fire. That is: until a whale is beached on their shore. Kin sees it first; he begs the fishermen to help him rescue it, and stays with it into the night, when all others have given up on returning it to the sea. When a giant wave sweeps in and carries the whale to safety, Kin is its only witness. The act marks a new beginning in Balaal, whose mayor immediately regards the boy as a threat.

But death squads can't stop a would-be leader who may be a shaman, a ghost, or a witch's child; tyrants cannot stop rebellions that are preordained. With the help of Jesa, the widow of an unlucky fisherman, Kin sets about forming a "bedraggled, ragtag army." They are armed with "old grievances," painted saints, and weapons cobbled together from the detritus of past decades; they are assisted by a bruja, a tiger, and the regime's fetidness and presumption. They march toward the palace, determined to prevail.

Amaworo Wilson's story is a wonder, thick with magical and imaginative details. There are village houses constructed of forks and flotsam; ancient tortoises that act as judges; and caves that measure the worth of weary travelers. Such rich accouterments are matched in power only by the promise at the novel's center: that even when circumstances seem hopeless, justice can prevail. *Nazaré* is a marvelous literary feat.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (November / December 2021)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.