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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ GENERAL FICTION

Shadow Cay

Leona DeRosa Bodie
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All Madeleine knew was she often saw things she couldn't explain to herself or others. And when she saw these visions, something bad always happened.

And bad things seemed to be continually happening around the sensitive 16-year-old's beautiful Bahamas home. All types of boats and their passengers have gone inexplicably missing over the past several years. In fact, Madeleine Nesbitt herself was almost one of the 102 victims of a commercial boating mishap eight years earlier, but was saved by teenager Peter Duncan.

Their lives become entwined once again through each of their connections with two dangerous men: Enrique "Rico" Salazar, whose own island paradise is actually a "multinational smuggling and refueling hub," and Adam Joseph "AJ" Hartman, president of JaHart International, a Miami-based company and major medical supplier of pacemakers.

Madeleine, calling herself "Lane," becomes unwillingly ensconced in Rico's operation; Peter, a war veteran, is headhunted by AJ for a major position in his successful company.

Rico and AJ, friends since their college days at the University of Florida and running from hardscrabble and neglected childhoods, have become ruthless in their pursuit of money and power. Rico, for example, feels no compunction for deliberately sabotaging boats that might get too near his livelihood.

The book's title comes from the word describing the small, low-lying, sandy islands which are predominant in the Caribbean, where a majority of the novel is set.

This is the Leona Bodie's debut adult novel. A former high-school English teacher and corporate executive, she also has several illustrated children's books to her credit. She's currently working on a sequel to *Shadow Cay*.

Bodie's characters are well drawn and nuanced. For example, the philandering and corrupt police chief reflects his sensitive side by feeding stray cats in a parking ramp. Quite a bit of the action is told in numerous flashbacks with appropriate corresponding dates at the section's beginning, but the technique can become confusing as multiple events transpire over the years.

Bodie's descriptions are exquisite. Rico's "world had more curves and excitement than a roller coaster." Rain "crackled like steak on red-hot charcoals." But when Peter and Madeleine eventually realize their personal connection—he'd saved her life as a child—it's almost anticlimactic. Some readers may be disappointed in what they might believe should be a pivotal moment, and also in the book's sterile and abrupt ending.

Readers who enjoy fast-paced adventure, mystery, and suspense will find all of that in this book. *Shadow Cay* contains some adult language and situations, but not enough to overwhelm or overly offend, although the bad guys are very bad guys. For example, Rico smiles as he watches people drown, "their useless lives gobbled up by the greedy sea."

Madeleine, a wise eighteen or so years of age at the book's conclusion, tells the idealistic Peter at one point, "Today I live like each day is my last. No regrets, because tomorrow may never come."

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (February 17, 2012)

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