ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

The Girl Who Rode Dolphins
Michael J. Ganas
978-1-4343-9362-3
Three Stars (out of Five)

Coming in at just over 700 pages this novel is not only epic in size but also in scope. The reader is taken on a journey along with the protagonist through the mountains of Tora Bora and beyond.

Jake Javolyn a former Navy Seal dive boat operator and sometime smuggler arrives in Haiti to keep a promise he made to a former comrade who was killed in the mountains of Tora Bora. It is here that the adventure begins. While on a hired boat Jake finds a girl named Destiny swimming in the open sea—a girl who as the title says rides dolphins. She is surrounded by white bottlenose dolphins and she becomes a lure for the protagonist. Jake ends up taking on Destiny's fight against a Colombian fishing trawler that's been hurting the dolphins and the action quickly escalates. From here elements of the mystical or supernatural come into play and Jake is surprised again and again by Destiny the dolphins and this unfamiliar world.

The story's out-of-this-world moments are easy to take because Jake himself is not a believer. Additionally first-time novelist Ganas is smart to take current events—animal rights war Navy Seals—and place them in a surreal or fantastical setting. This mix is what makes this book special and appealing to a variety of readers.

The novel is plot-driven and this is both its greatest achievement and greatest downfall. Ganas has a lot of story to tell and because of this the prose seems purposeful—a means to an end. Consequently there are times where the prose is too loud too dramatic as if Ganas doesn't necessarily trust his reader to pick up each slice of emotion or action. Thus the vivid scenery and its players are not always depicted with the most original language. Additionally the love story that develops seems forced a tagged on development created to tie a bow on the story.

The beauty of *The Girl Who Rode Dolphin*s is that it straddles the line between reality and fantasy. The novel's metaphors are sharp and keyed in to the difficult task of the earth and its possible destruction. Ganas is a smart writer: his plot is full of metaphors that link back to today's fight against pollution and violence a world sometimes too selfish to care about places we can't see or fathom. The book dares to call for the "rebirth of hope" and with its loaded plot and fast action even the most critical of readers will find themselves wrapped up in the

adventure and hoping in spite of themselves for a light at the end of the tunnel.

Lisa Bower