

## Winds of the Marquesas

**E. C. Olson**

Man O' War Publishing (Jul 25, 2014)

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*Historical events are made personal with the perspective of these two Florida families in this years-spanning novel.*

E. C. Olson's *Winds of the Marquesas* is a tour de force in the realm of historical novels. Olson weaves together a tale spanning years with two families as they brush elbows with historical figures and are affected by key events of the times.

At the story's center reside the Collinses and the Adderleys, who make their home together on an estate called Torchwood in the Florida Keys. The Collinses have white, European ancestry, but have been in the Keys for many years. The Adderleys are also Keys natives, but they have Bahamian heritage, making their skin brown. Despite their different surnames and racial make-up, the Collinses and Adderleys treat each other as one big family. When the patriarchs, Roy Collins and George Adderley, disappear along with grandson Silas Adderley, the remaining members of the clan become closer.

Including literary luminaries such as Ernest Hemingway, prominent mobsters like Bugsy Siegel, and joint American-German efforts to assassinate Hitler, the book captures the gritty realism of an era while being entertaining enough to keep the pages turning. Bursting with themes of the power of love, the importance of family, and the impressiveness of nature, Olson's book is a thought-provoking read. The beautiful backdrop of the Florida Keys also becomes a multifaceted character in and of itself, thanks to rich, evocative description.

Although all members of the Collins-Adderley group emerge as nuanced and likable, the women in particular represent a force to be reckoned with. Ellen Collins stumbles but does not fall in the face of adversity. While Roy's disappearance grieves her, she rises to the occasion, becoming a functional depressive who holds the family together. Her daughter, Clarity Collins, an intense, intelligent, active bookworm, goes astray upon the loss of her father but never loses her bright core. Rebecca Adderley bears the absence of her brother and grandfather with fortitude, able to put aside her sorrow to reach out to the wayward Clarity. Rebecca's grandmother, Olivia, remains rock-solid during this time, helping Ellen keep the family afloat.

The story is at its best when history and the Collins-Adderley clan meet. Unfortunately, there are large portions of the story concerning only historical events, without tying in the linchpin family. This results in chapters solely about mobsters, Nazis, Fidel Castro, and the like, with nary a mention of anything Collins-Adderley. There is enough historical intrigue here for five or six books. The final product, a choppy page-turner because of its short chapters, would make for a more powerful novel if a few of the historical elements were dropped and the lively fictional clan made more central. The book's excess becomes apparent at the outset, as the back-cover blurb, which normally contains just enough to get the audience hooked, takes away all suspense by detailing the key events in the book.

Olson plans a prequel and a sequel. This book is recommended for history buffs.

JILL ALLEN (January 3, 2015)

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