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TONY HILLERMAN

Bestselling author of
SACRED CLOWNS and COYOTE WAITS



LISTENING WOMAN

"HILLERMAN'S MYSTERIES ARE SPECIAL ...
LISTENING WOMAN IS AMONG THE BEST."
—WASHINGTON POST

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Listening Woman by Tony Hillerman. HarperCollins Publishers, 1978

Listening Woman Details

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From Reader Review Listening Woman for online ebook

Jan says

Tony Hillerman, RIP Sir, and thank you for your military service and your wonderful stories. I am quite sure I read this one eons ago, as it sounded familiar, however, I enjoyed it very much. I love the characters of Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee and the stories are always brilliant.

This was first published around 1978. Story: an old man and young girl have been murdered, Listening Woman was there, but she is blind, and unable to tell the police anything. Lt. Leaphorn is about to figure it all out, but not without long rides, and attending a Kinnaalda, where more information is revealed. He also has other cases, a old case re monies and a helicopter, and some one has to keep an eye out on the Boy Scouts, however, he passes that case on. He is soon to find out, all the three, become one.

Mr. Hillerman can take you into the story, you are there on the mountain tops, walking along canyons and crawling in the caves. Tony Hillerman books are always a "good read", and this too will be passed on for someone else to enjoy.

Talyseon Talyseon says

Most books succeed in a single purpose; Tony Hillerman managed to write gripping whodunits that snuck a minicourse in anthropology in when you weren't looking. That makes them among my favorites. Check my full review: Listening Woman

Joan says

This was more interesting for the exposure to Dine (Navajo) philosophy and thought processes than for the mystery. The mystery was written in 1978, a decade when there were quite a few political kidnappings and related crimes. This is a political kidnapping and crime. Leaphorn with his respect for order and rational thought gets caught up in it when he tries to figure out why an old Dine man has been murdered, along with a girl that basically was at the wrong place at the wrong time. There was a fascinating amount of geology in the book, as well as Dine religious belief. I'm not sure that this would hold up to the test of time unless the reader knew the philosophy behind the political kidnappings, it was revenge for old wrongs but also a sure way to get publicity for your cause. However, it certainly kept me interested. I read the book pretty quickly. I'll admit partly because the library due date was imminent but also because it kept my interest. Recommended to Leaphorn fans and Dine philosophy fans.

Patrick Gibson says

There are few things as satisfying as looking into the methodical mind of Detective Joe Leaphorn. While many people read Tony Hillerman for his insights into Navajo culture, I most enjoy his depiction of the always thoughtful Leaphorn.

In Listening Woman, Leaphorn faces his usual inter-tangled mess of events: being nearly run over by a maniac, the theft of a helicopter, and two unsolved deaths in a remote corner of the reservation. The joy of this book is its window into Leaphorn's mind as he tries to make sense of seemingly random events.

Hillerman's mysteries are enjoyable because he keeps the details in front of the reader. His detectives express bafflement, hold erroneous assumptions, and are very much prone to mistaken judgement. As such, they are real and believable.

Listening Woman features a remarkable and intense closing sequence—one of Hillerman's best and I heartily recommend it.

Bill Donhiser says

Another fine Tony Hillerman novel. Mixing Navajo patrolman Joe Leaphorn with domestic terrorists, kidnapping and armored car robbery. this one is a winner. Fun read

Jim says

Tony Hillerman's third Navajo thriller written in 1978, "Listening Woman" is a true classic. Lt. Joe Leaphorn is on the case and must battle danger at every turn. Hillerman has such wonderful characters to read. His characters come alive off the pages full of life and depth. Even Hillerman's bad guys are finely crafted . ""Listening Woman, at a very quick 289 pages was an incredible thriller. With each page it's seems to transport the reader to Canyon de Chelly, or along the Arizona/ Utah border. At times it's feels like the story is being read within a hogan from the mouth of a Navajo. This classic read is a real 5 star out of 5 stars must read. If you haven't read any of tony Hillerman's books as of yet, why not ?

Mary says

Book 3 and I'm still a little on the fence.

The Listening Woman, Margaret Cigaret, is a shaman who talks to those who need healing, meditates and then prescribes a Sing or Way to help cure them. When she is meditating about Hosteen Tso, both he and her young assistant are murdered. Luckily the killer didn't see Margaret and given that she was meditating (and is blind) she was unable to provide any help to the police. Several months later, a man wearing Goldrims tries to run over Lt. Joe Leaphorn of the Navajo Tribal Police. As he investigates he finds references to the Listening Woman case, an old stolen helicopter and a boy scout troop visiting the area.

Leaphorn is a great character. Slowly, as we learn more about him, we are getting to know his personality. His need for order and precision along with his almost unmatched tracking ability. I enjoy reading this series because of him.

On the other hand, I've found that the stories themselves aren't quite clicking with me as a reader. Book 2's mystery was a little too simple. And while I felt the story was stronger in book 3, there was still something missing. Certain plot points were drawn out over several pages and in one case several chapters (which I

understand - he was trying to build tension) but others were glossed over too quickly in just a few paragraphs. I would have preferred a more consistent writing style and, if need be, a longer book to fully flesh out those scenes.

I guess I feel like Hillerman hadn't yet matured as a writer when this was published. My hope is to continue to see growth as the series progresses.

Even considering my issues with the writing, I would still recommend this series to anyone who enjoys mysteries or Native American literature. 3.5/5 stars.

Carmen says

I don't have much to say about this book. I don't even have an opening quote to start with.

This is the third Navajo novel by Hillerman. It was an entertaining and quick read, but nothing special. Nothing really stood out for me.

It seems as if MC Joe Leaphorn is going to turn out to be a good man. I like this. However, he didn't do anything particularly noteworthy in this novel.

A perfectly decent if uninspiring mystery.

Betty says

I have now read several of his books now and feel this one is the best one I have read. Joe given some cold cases to solve so he will not be babysitting a bunch of boy scouts meeting on Navajo land. Included are a missing helicopter, take of an important individual, deaths of 2 Navajos and the man that tried to run over Joe. It takes place entirely on Navajo reservation so a lot of the Navajo way of life is explained. Joe's priority is the man. He finds the car and the driver and large dog are missing. He stops at McGinnis's store and learns about AIM some years ago. The problems are woven together nicely. On the way there are some twists and turns.

Craig Monson says

Tony Hillerman's third mystery (1978) still features the Navajo Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn on his own: no Jim Chee, no wife Emma, certainly no Bernie Manuelito. Possibly Hillerman was trying out a new writing strategy. There is the usual slice of Dinee lifeways (e.g., "Listening Woman's" diagnostic practices used to determine the appropriate "sing" to cure an illness; the use of Kinaaldá, a girl's puberty ceremony, as the backdrop for some serious sleuthing), but the author seems also to be trying his hand at a high action thriller, which takes over the narrative for the final third. Writing in the aftermath of the Wounded Knee Standoff of 1973, Hillerman makes his Buffalo Society an offshoot of the American Indian Movement, but more akin, perhaps, to ISIS or the Taliban. The Lieutenant gets himself into a very tight spot and things get very dark: this is about as close as Leaphorn ever comes to Dwayne Johnson, still relying on brains and ingenuity, but also on more than the usual brawn. Tension mounts to a noisier and shakier conclusion than normal,

requiring some of the suspension of disbelief that high action dramas often demand. The controversial Ward Churchill, incidentally, heaped particular scorn on *Listening Woman* in his indictment of Anglo's literary and cinematic treatment of Native Americans, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema & the Colonization of American Indians*.

Bill says

Another good entry into a fascinating series. I really enjoy the beautiful descriptions of Navajo country. The plot is very involved and includes a lot of Navajo lore. Lt. Joe Leaphorn gets into seemingly impossible situations but manages to escape time and time again. Great series! Four (4) stars.

Paul says

I have read the majority of the Tony Hillerman Navajo Mysteries (Joe Leaphorn/Jim Chee). I really enjoy reading about the 4 corners area and learning more about the Navajos, their history, and their culture.

Listening Woman is a very compelling read. Many Hillerman fans think that it is one of his best novels in an 18 book series. I liked it, too.

Hillerman combines some really good elements including murder, kidnapping, theft, religious superstitions, a vicious dog, a Navajo Catholic priest, a violent Navajo militant group, boy scouts, the FBI, a man with gold glasses, a helicopter, fire, a massive explosion, and Joe Leaphorn the detective who gets to the bottom of the case while surviving some very harrowing experiences.

If you like the great American Southwest (NM, AZ, UT, CO), American Indian culture and history, compelling characters and intriguing mystery, then Hillerman provides plenty of good reading material.

Kurt W.G. Matthies says

While Listening Woman is one of the early Leaphorn novels, it is still a well structured mystery, and contains a hogan full of Navajo culture. One of my favorite Hillerman references that links real life to his fictional world is Joe Leaphorn's grandfather, called Hosteen Klee-Thlumie by Shorty McGinnis of the fictional Short Hills trading post in the western Big Rez. McGinnis also refers to Hosteen Klee as "horse kicker."

Those of you who have visited the Newcomb and Two Grey Hills trading posts in New Mexico, near the Toadlena school (off Highway 666, renamed in recent years as NM 491 to appease superstitious Revelationists), know the fame of Hosteen Klah and his family. Klah, a traditional Navajo haatali, lived 100 years ago with his sister and family in the Two Grey Hills area. Arthur and Frances Newcomb, who bought the trading post that bears their name around 1915, befriended Klah, and supported the fine rugs woven by both the man and his sister.

Shortly after WWI, Mary Cabot Wheelwright, of the New England Brahmin Cabot family, visited the

Newcomb outpost, and struck up a friendship with Mrs. Newcomb. She returned again in 1928 with plans for a museum dedicated to Indian art in Santa Fe. The Wheelwright museum was founded on the works of Hosteen Klah and his sister, and those magnificent rugs hung there until the 1970s, when they were transferred to the Dineh College in Tsaile, AZ, over the Chuskas from Two Grey Hills.

Last September (2010), I happened down 666 to Gallup, and on passing Two Grey Hills, decided to take the short detour west to visit the trading post. There, I met an old white man and his Navajo partner, who offered me a cup of coffee. We spoke of old Klah, and on learning my interest, I was lead into a back room where I was shown stacks of smaller rugs geometrical design, in the traditional white, grey, and black tones of the region, rugs that were woven by the Klah clan and the apprentice, Clyde Beyel. I spent a peaceful hour smelling sheep wool, and working my way through the stacks of a clan's life work.

The Two Grey Hills trading post is about 5 miles off the main highway from Cortez to Gallup, call it 491, 666, or whatever. It is also accessible from Window Rock, north over Narbona pass, but take a jeep -- this road, though marked 'improved' on the famous AAA Indian Country map, is nothing but a graded, dry boulder flume.

To learn more about Hosteen Klah, see Frances Newcomb's book: Hosteen Klah: Navaho Medicine Man and Sand Painter, noted here on Goodreads.com at <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/14...>

In Listening Woman, we learn more about Hosteen Klee than we do in the other Leaphorn books. I can't help but wonder if Tony intentionally wove the real Hosteen Klah ("klah" corresponds to the Navajo word for 'left-handed'), into the fictional character Hosteen Klee -- a fitting grandfather for the Legendary Lieutenant; a man with one foot in traditional Navajo values, and the other in the modern police forensics.

Yet, I wouldn't suggest that those Hillerman fans who are also television people should expect a CSI:Window Rock episode in the near future.

--kwgm

Courtney says

I like partners for the fact that we get to know the characters better with their interactions rather than just living with one point of view. Leaphorn needed a partner. I liked the Begay boy from the beginning.

Jason says

***1/2

A fine early Leaphorn novel involving a bank robbery, two murders and the aims of a radical offshoot of the American Indian Movement who want to exact revenge on whites for an obscure massacre that occurred in Texas in the 19th Century. Well paced, but lacks the character exploration of the Navajo police that Hillerman gives us in later novels in this series. The villians's backstories are engrossing, and the action scenes, especially the claustrophobic forced spelunking that Leaphorn is forced into, are believable and effective. PEOPLE OF THE DARKNESS remains my favorite Hillerman novel; THE BLESSING WAY is

my least favorite (Leaphorn as Navajo MacGyver).

Harold Norman says

Tony Hillerman's experience as a newspaperman shows through in his work and the Listening Woman is no exception. Hillerman takes you not only into an interesting criminal investigation with lots of plot twists, dead ends and surprises, but he also takes you deep into Navajo culture and traditions which adds to the richness of the overall experience.

This book was third in the Navajo series, and I recommend you start with the first one and work your way through, as they build on one another. Listening Woman adds nicely to the first two in the series and takes it forward to another level.

Rage says

I enjoy this series. I am trying to read through it all in order. I'm giving this one only three stars is due to my own personal preferences - the story ends up in survival/thriller territory, where the character has been badly injured, hasn't had food, there are hostages etc., and that has always made for stressful & unenjoyable reading for me. what I really enjoy about this series is the familiarity of the characters, descriptions of nature... elements that make it feel cozy for me. however, again, that's purely personal preference and as an early entry in the series, I suspect this was an opportunity for Hillerman to try new things and explore how far he can push his characters.

Judy says

I always like Tony Hillerman. I live in Arizona and have been around Navajo people all of my life so that makes the storys even sweeter. By reading books by Tony Hillerman I have learned a little about the Navajo way of life. I have visited the reservation and the people are delightful.

Mom says

The blind shaman called Listening Woman speaks of witches and restless spirits, of supernatural evil unleashed. But Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn of the Navajo Tribal Police is sure the monster who savagely slaughtered an old man and a teenage girl was human. The solution to a horrific crime is buried somewhere in a dead man's secrets and in the shocking events of a hundred years past. To ignore the warnings of a venerable seer, however, might be reckless foolishness when Leaphorn's investigation leads him farther away from the comprehensible...and closer to the most brutally violent confrontation of his career.

Paul and I listened to this on our way over to Farmington, NM. I love Tony Hillerman. He always has a good mystery going on and this was no different. It's fun to hear about places and people in that area because many are familiar.

Larissa says

Had it not been for some unfortunate connotations that I had with Hillerman (he was the author of choice for a particularly Wicked Stepmother), I would have most likely read his whole oeuvre by now. When he died earlier this year, I decided to make like a good Southwesterner and rectify this omission in my reading list. The problem was I didn't really know where to start. (I was told by an enthusiastic library volunteer in Oro Valley, AZ that I should just start at the beginning and work my way through, but that seemed a little more time consuming than I was ultimately prepared for.) In the end, a discount book rack in Portland, Maine made my decision for me. I started with *Listening Woman* because I was able to buy it for a dollar.

This ended up being a good introduction, I think, even if it was pretty arbitrary. A little further research and I now know that this is one of the few Hillerman mysteries featuring just Joe Leaphorn; his counterpart (and subordinate) Sgt. Jim Chee is introduced relatively early on in the series. It's also not one of the more high profile (read: multi-awarded, movie-versioned) novels. This combined leads me to believe that I had a rather organic introduction to the Leaphorn series.

Listening Woman had a number of things to recommend it--good characterization, evocative descriptions of the harsh and beautiful landscape of the Navajo Reservation where the book takes place, and snappy pacing. On the flip-side, the plot was, from the get-go, unnecessarily complicated--involving three separate cold-cases that come together to form one master crime scenario, the ending (though exciting) drug out far too long, and descriptions of action (dynamite exploding and killing people, notably) was rendered in such a way to make it unclear to the reader where people were and what exactly was going on.

In the end, though, two things about this novel stuck out to me. Firstly, there's the empathetic descriptions of Navajo culture and traditions (especially when contrasted/dramatized against the background of 'White' culture). About mid-way through the novel, Leaphorn visits a Navajo clan during a Kinaalda--a sacred coming of age ceremony for a Navajo woman. The description of the ceremony itself is rather moving, but it was Leaphorn's reaction to it that really struck me:

"Leaphorn found himself, as he had since childhood, caught up in the hypnotic repetition of pattern which blended meaning, rhythm, and sound in something more than the total of all of them...A girl becoming a woman, and her people celebrating this addition to the Dinee with joy and reverence. Leaphorn found himself singing, too. The anger he had brought--despite all the taboos--to this ceremonial had been overcome. Leaphorn felt restored in harmony.

He had a loud, clear voice and he used it...The big man glanced at him, a friendly look. Across the hogan, Leaphorn noticed, two of the women were smiling at him. He was a stranger, a policeman who arrested one of them, a man from another clan, perhaps even a witch, but he was accepted with the natural hospitality of the Dinee. He felt a fierce pride in his people, and in this celebration of womanhood."

It's a short passage, but so much is conveyed in it--not only about Navajo customs that many would be unfamiliar with, but about Leaphorn as well.

The other thing that stuck with me about this book is that contrary to my usual preferences, the amazing amount of coincidence and eventual connectivity of various, seemingly unrelated plot elements didn't bother me at all. In part, this is due to Leaphorn's own ethos: "Leaphorn didn't believe in [coincidence:]. He

believed that nothing happened without cause. Everything intermeshed, from the mood of a man, to the flight of a corn beetle, to the music of the wind. It was the Navajo philosophy, his concept of interwoven harmony, and it was bred into Joe Leaphorn's bones." This alone might not have satisfied me, however--it's all well and good for Leaphorn to believe in "interwoven harmony," but in fiction, such connectivity generally strikes me as heavy-handed and simplistic. But Hillerman makes a practical point early on that though obvious, perhaps, wouldn't have occurred to me otherwise: "If two white strangers appeared at about the same time in this out-of-the-way corner, one headed for the Tso hogan and the other aimed in that direction, logic insisted that more than coincidence was involved."

Definitely a promising start for me. I think I'll try *Skinwalkers* next, but if anyone has other recommendations, let me know.
