



Song of the Lion

Anne Hillerman

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***New York Times* Bestseller**

A deadly bombing takes Navajo Tribal cops Bernadette Manuelito, Jim Chee, and their mentor, the legendary Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn, back into the past to find a vengeful killer in this riveting Southwestern mystery from the bestselling author of *Spider Woman's Daughter* and *Rock with Wings*.

When a car bomb kills a young man in the Shiprock High School parking lot, Officer Bernadette Manuelito discovers that the intended victim was a mediator for a multi-million-dollar development planned at the Grand Canyon.

But what seems like an act of ecoterrorism turns out to be something far more nefarious and complex. Piecing together the clues, Bernadette and her husband, Sergeant Jim Chee, uncover a scheme to disrupt the negotiations and inflame tensions between the Hopi and Dine tribes.

Retired Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn has seen just about everything in his long career. As the tribal police's investigation unfolds, he begins to suspect that the bombing may be linked to a cold case he handled years ago. As he, Bernadette, and Chee carefully pull away the layers behind the crime, they make a disturbing discovery: a meticulous and very patient killer with a long-simmering plan of revenge.

Writing with a clarity and grace that is all her own, Anne Hillerman depicts the beauty and mystery of Navajo Country and the rituals, myths, and customs of its people in a mystery that builds on and complements the beloved, bestselling mysteries of her acclaimed father, Tony Hillerman.

Song of the Lion Details

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From Reader Review Song of the Lion for online ebook

Sharon says

Another great novel from Anne Hillerman! Aside from a good mystery set against a background of Navajo culture and the rugged beauty of the American Southwest, I really like the way this author handles the "romantic" side of her stories. Without resorting to "sex scenes" she conveys the love and affection that Jim Chee and Bernadette Manuelito have for one another in a way that adds to the story and takes nothing away from it. In my experience this is unusual and I consider it a mark of a very good writer.

Barb in Maryland says

Read the blurb--it's a good one, so I am not going to do any kind of plot re-cap.

It is always good to visit with Bernadette Manuelito, her husband, Jim Chee and the Legendary Lieutenant, Joe Leaphorn. I really like these people.

Anne Hillerman gives us a nice twisty mystery as well as a close up look at life on the Navajo lands of New Mexico and Arizona. The clues are all there--they just need to be recognized and connected. The light bulb went on for me just about the same time it did for Leaphorn. Well played, Ms Hillerman.

While I generally disapprove of a second author continuing the work of an author who has died, I am happy to make an exception for Anne Hillerman. She does her father proud. May she always walk in beauty.

Michael says

Hillerman is really getting her stride in her approach to continuing her father's wonderful series about cases of the Navaho tribal police in New Mexico. Jim Chee, now a sergeant and less of a Boy Scout, still gets a lot of air time, while his old mentor Captain Leaphorn, from his position of retirement and partial debilitation from getting shot in the head, provides sage advice to him when he seeks it out. What Hillerman brings to the table is full appropriation and extended development of the rookie policewoman Bernie Manueleto, now happily married to Chee. From the first of her three volumes so far, Hillerman makes her the star as much as Chee. I just love her energetic personality and hunger to solve cases. She excels at people skills and insights into what makes them tick, but she has a bit of a weakness in taking too many risks. The latter she may share with many of the kickass heroines so popular now, but instead of martial arts she uses her wits and acting abilities to get out of serious scrapes her impetuosity can sometimes bring down on her.

The start of the book is quite exciting and reveals Bernie as a brilliant and brave woman of action. A car bomb goes off in the parking lot at a basketball game she is attending in Shiprock, and she responds takes charge of the scene. She deftly assesses the existence and status of victims, the safety of the environs, and marshals security staff and volunteers to keep the attendees inside until more help comes. In the middle of all that she has the wherewithal to probe for potential witnesses, all the while standing up to people who doubt her authority due to being a young woman dressed in a t-shirt and shorts. Despite this competence, she makes a mistake by missing a body of a man killed in the explosion.

To make up for her mistake she devotes herself to the task of helping the FBI, who are responsible for dealing with serious felonies on the reservation. Once it becomes clear that the body is that of a local

troubled youth and the fancy car that of a mediation lawyer who will soon lead a conference among stakeholders for and against a development project near the Grand Canyon, several possibilities come to mind. Her gift of logical thinking leads her to come up with eight different possibilities for motives for the bomb and connections between the dead man and the mediator Aza Palmer.

Meanwhile, Chee is assigned to the security of Palmer until and during the upcoming conference several hours away in Tuba City. Chee hates this “babysitting” task, which is made more difficult by Palmer’s lack of concern for threats on his life and willingness to meet privately with various attendees desperate for him to shape his mediation toward their viewpoint. He, and we, get a decent education on the broad range of organizations that would be invested in the outcome of such a proceeding, including the resort developers themselves, the Navaho, Hopi, and other tribal governments in the region, the National Park Service, wildlife conservationists and other ecological advocacy groups, and organizations concerned with preserving or expanding land use for recreational and hunting opportunities. The story highlights the realistic conflict between tribal interests in both preservation of sacred sites and enhancement of the dismal economical opportunities for the tribes and their people. Radical individuals associated with several of these groups could potentially want to kill Palmer and derail the mediation process.

It touching to have a day-to-day window on Bernie and Chee’s healthy marriage, which is marked by good humor and effective teamwork touched with an element of competition. Once we are witness to the following bit of romance, we are ready to snarl at anyone that thwarts them:

He reached for her, and she felt good in his arms, warm, strong, and soft in the places where soft matters. He loved the texture and smell of her long silky hair, the way her kiss made him forget everything except wanting to kiss her again.

Leaphorn and FBI agent Cordova make significant contributions to solving the case, but Bernie and Jim get themselves in the center of some dangerous scenarios which brings the perpetrator to light. I was happy with most of the presentation and plotting, but I was not impressed with the unrealistic character of otherworldly character and stupid neglect of danger on the part of Palmer. Also, the story surrounding the bad guy in the tale felt contrived.

With the first book, “Spider Woman’s Daughter”, I was impressed with the revitalization of her father’s characters and enthused about Bernie and Jim as a duo. The second one I stayed away from based on friends’ reactions. Thus, I am glad how promising the third one turned out to be, given modest reservations. As much as I appreciate her innovations with a strong female lead, I hope she will work on retaining more of her father’s approach to the characters’ sense of connectivity to nature and to Jim’s earlier ambitions to develop into a medicine man.

Jean says

Anne Hillerman’s story features tribal police officer Bernadette “Bernie” Manuelito, who is married to Sgt. Jim Chee. Her mentor is Joe Leaphorn who is recovering from a head injury. Bernie attends a Shiprock High School basketball game while she is off duty. A car is bombed in the parking lot and Bernie is the first on scene. The car belongs to Aza Palmer, an attorney who is the official mediator between the Native American tribes, the environmentalists and a corporation who wants to build a resort on Navajo land near the Grand

Canyon. Chee and Manuelito must solve the crime.

The book is well written and researched. Anne Hillerman seems to be getting better with each book she writes. I enjoyed the information about the different tribal affiliates, language, and the conflict between the Navajo and Hopi. The author explains the various Navajo tribal myths and customs which to me makes the story far more interesting. I think most readers will have figured out who the perpetrator is before the end of the book. Somehow, that knowledge only increases the suspense to find out if you are correct and how will they be revealed in the story.

I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. The book is approximately ten hours long. Christina Delaine does a good job narrating the story. Delaine is a stage actress and voice over artist as well as an audiobook narrator.

Barbara says

The alumni basketball game at New Mexico's Shiprock High School always draws a big crowd, and Navajo Police Officer Bernadette Manuelito (Bernie) is on hand to watch the teams play. An explosion in the parking lot draws Bernie outside, where she sees a car in flames. Bernie calls for backup, and the police and FBI soon discover that the vehicle was ignited by a car bomb and one man was seriously injured - and soon died.

It turns out the car belongs to Aza Palmer, a Navajo lawyer slated to mediate a conference in Tuba City, Arizona. The conference concerns a proposed resort at the Grand Canyon - a project that's very controversial. The attendees will include the resort developers; local Indian tribes (Navajo and Hopi); and various environmental organizations. In addition, 'open microphone sessions' are expected to attract a large number of opinionated people, determined to have their say.

Palmer isn't injured by the bomb but the Navajo police think it might have been intended to kill him, to stop him attending the conference. For this reason Sergeant Jim Chee (Bernie's husband) is assigned to drive Palmer to Tuba City and act as a bodyguard.

When the bomb victim is identified as twenty-something Rick Horseman, Palmer is very upset. He's known Rick for years, and tried to help the boy when he was abusing drugs and alcohol. Palmer can't fathom what happened at Shiprock High School, won't accept that he's in danger, and doesn't want a bodyguard. This negative thinking doesn't help when Palmer and Chee get to Tuba City, and all kinds of trouble erupts.

Someone in a car follows Palmer; the lights go out in the conference venue; the heating malfunctions in the building; demonstrators mill around and cause one ruckus after another; detractors shout at Palmer - claiming he's in the pocket of the builders; a violent protester bangs up a car with his sign; and so on.

Since Bernie has a few days off, she joins Chee in Tuba City, where they cooperate to protect Palmer and investigate the bombing. The inquiry is really the job of the FBI, but the two Navajo cops want to help.

To get needed advice, Bernie contacts Joe Leaphorn, 'The Legendary Lieutenant' who mentored herself and Chee. Leaphorn is retired now, recovering from a head injury that impaired his speech. The Lieutenant can

still email, however, and - when he hears the name Rick Horseman - realizes he knew the victim. In fact Leaphorn rescued Rick from an abusive home when he was a child.

Bernie, Chee, and Leaphorn all make a contribution to the resolution of the case, and the book has a believable and satisfying conclusion. I like that Bernie really shows her mettle at the book's climax.

The original 'Navajo Tribal Police Mysteries' were written by Tony Hillerman, and his daughter Anne is following in his footsteps, continuing to write stories with the same characters. Anne does a creditable job, and provides a nod to Navajo customs, but I liked Tony's books better.

Tony's mysteries had more scenes concerning Navajo culture and beliefs, and - in Tony's novels - Jim Chee was studying to be a traditional healer.....which was very interesting. In addition, Tony's main character was 'The Legendary Lieutenant' himself - an unbeatable detective with a compelling background.

Still, 'The Song of the Lion' is a good mystery with an interesting setting; Bernie and Chee are likable characters; and fans of the series would enjoy the book.

The novel provides sufficient background to be read as a standalone.

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Craig Monson says

Anne Hillerman's latest mystery is very timely indeed. In the real world (as opposed to the fictional world), the Dinee tribal government, which after decades of spurning casinos had finally succumbed to the enticements of that supposed cash cow about a decade ago, has nevertheless just REJECTED the financial enticements of the so-called "Grand Canyon Escalade." Controversy surrounding that elaborate venture, which would have added a tramway, a hotel and other tourist amenities to the Grand Canyon's east rim, drives the plot of Hillerman's novel, only published in late September. (The "Grand Canyon Escalade" website now proclaims, "Welcome and please be patient as we re-think and re-format our web presence. We have some exiting [sic!] new ideas and information we will be rolling out in the future." Perhaps our commander-in-chief, on route to Bears' Ears, will send in the cavalry to set things right for the Dinee, too.)

The conflict between tree-huggers and developers, which had only cropped up as a side-issue in A.H.'s previous two mysteries, now takes center stage. The landscape also shifts from the eastern edge of the Rez, Shiprock and the Lukachukai Mountains, to the less familiar west country around Tuba City and the Grand Canyon, 90 minutes away. Bernie Manuelito and Jim Chee's attempts to negotiate the perils and complexities inherent in competing governmental, entrepreneurial, tribal, and personal vested interests seem, perhaps, to allow less time for aspects of Native culture that are a trademark of the Hillerman brand. These also tend to linger around less happy realities such as alcoholism, domestic abuse, and the vexed, decades-old Navajo-Hopi land dispute and relocation. But despite all these distractions, Bernie and Jim's relationship manages to flourish. (In the tradition of her father, the daughter treats the corporeal romantic aspects of their relationship with appropriate Dinee modesty.) The sidelined Joe Leaphorn, back on his feet and back in his truck, begins to assume a more prominent role. But Bernie seems destined to dominate the stage from now on. (3.5 stars, rounded up)

Michele Bond says

I believe Anne Hillerman does a credible job following in her father's footsteps with new Chee, Manuelito, and Leaphorn. And don't forget Cowboy Dashee. I was so pleased to discover that more books were coming. The only thing that troubled me was so little written about the lion himself. A good read by an excellent storyteller!

Beth says

In respect for her father, Tony, I gave her third novel a chance, but I am done. The book was mind numbingly boring until the last 30 pages, and by then I had already figured out who was behind it all. I only finished the book because I felt I had to in order to count it toward my yearly total. Don't waste your time.

Carole says

Of the 3 books by Anne Hillerman, I think I liked this one the best...lots of interesting details, suspense and well tied together to make a satisfying ending , including the entrance of the Mountain Lion near the end of the story. We learn lots of interesting details about Navajos , Hopis and Paiutes etc.. Two details strike me. It would be nice if Bernie Manuelito could learn to improve her diet, before she develops Diabetes like Palmer and so many other indians. After all Grandfather gave his people vegetables to keep them healthy, not just hamburgers and fried food. Also, if native peoples want to improve their lives and save Nature, such as the Grand Canyon , it would help if they learned to work together better. Overall, an enjoyable read and worth a leisurely read reflecting on many ideas the author introduces.

Chris Conley says

How lovely that Anne Hillerman has taken characters her dad created and keep them alive. This book is wonderful. The mystery is sharply drawn and resolved in a way that works so very well. I am loving this series.

Betsy says

Another disappointing edition to the Manuelito saga. It has become her story and that of her family while Chee and Leaphorn are just there for their names.

Rosie says

Anne is definitely not her dad. The poetry, the simplicity that mad Tony's prose so hypnotic and soothing is completely absent here. And the mystery just isn't that good.

Linda says

Everything in balance. He smiled. The Navajo Way.

But something is definitely off kilter when a bomb explodes in the parking lot at Shiprock High School during a popular basketball game. Although off-duty, Officer Bernie Manuelito takes charge and keeps the anxious crowd at bay. She comes across a young male victim on the ground near a burned out car. Near death, he struggles to breathe and leaves no clues as to his identity.

The owner of the demolished car, Aza Palmer, shows up. Palmer is a partner in a law firm in Phoenix who is working in mediation in regard to a multi-million dollar development planned at the Grand Canyon. The Hopi and Dine tribes are having none of this on their sacred ground. Palmer tells Bernie that he's already received threats. Could this explosion be a smackin' reminder served to Palmer and the development company to back off? Or are there more devious fingers in this ecosystem pie than first thought?

She'd said, "Check your email," and then, "Be careful, sir. There were some rough players in this case."

And these rough players give cause for Bernie's husband, Sergeant Jim Chee, to be assigned as a bodyguard for Aza Palmer during the negotiation meetings taking place in Tuba City. Chee doesn't take kindly to his new position as he weaves between FBI agents and Palmer's evasive attitude. Bernie decides to join him in Tuba City on her off time from the Navajo Police. And she's gonna be staring into this depth of unexpected crime like loose footing on the Canyon's edge.

This is the third book for Anne Hillerman and I believe that this is her best. Following in the footsteps of her late father, Tony Hillerman, is a daunting task. But this time, Anne leaves her own personal writing impressions laced with fine talent and an accute presentation of the Navajo, Hopi, and Dine cultures. She continues to broaden the scopes of her stellar main characters of Leaphorn, Chee, and Manuelito.

Song of the Lion can be read and enjoyed as a standalone. Hillerman sets the action from the first page and rounds out her characters and situations early on in order to give the reader smooth sailing throughout. Her research is incredible and exhibits a true labor of love.

Anne Hillerman, I'm a solid fan and anxiously waiting the arrival of the next.

Garlan 🦁 says

I'm really enjoying Anne Hillerman's books. She picks up where her father left off, telling the stories of LT Leaphorn and Detectives Chee and Manuelito of the Navajo police. I can scarcely tell the difference between the two authors, although Anne does focus more heavily on Bernie Manuelito as the main focus of her novels rather than the two males. In any case, good police work, great descriptions of the American southwest, and

always good personal stories that lead to a good finish.

Nikki says

Officer Bernadette Manuelito is off-duty and attending a students-vs.-alumni basketball game when a car explodes in the parking lot. The plot keeps thickening as her husband, Jim Chee, is detailed as a bodyguard to the car's owner, a local boy made good who is the attorney mediating discussions about a proposed development at the Grand Canyon. Questions of family, the environment, and intertribal tensions come up in Bernie's investigation, and retired Lt. Joe Leaphorn consults and remembers the past. Once again, Anne Hillerman has proven worthy to continue her father's legacy. Very highly recommended.
