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Human bones lie on a ledge under the peak of Ship Rock mountain, the remains of a murder victim undisturbed for more than a decade. Three hundred miles across the Navajo reservation, a harmless old canyon guide is felled by a sniper's bullet. Joe Leaphorn, recently retired from the Navajo Tribal Police, believes the shooter and the skeleton are somehow connected and recalls a chilling puzzle he was previously unable to solve. But Acting Lieutenant Jim Chee is too busy to take an interest in a dusty cold case ... until the reborn violence of it hits much too close to home.

The Fallen Man Details

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From Reader Review *The Fallen Man* for online ebook

Michael Fox says

This may be my favorite Tony Hillerman novel. It brings together some of his more notable characters introduced in prior books and continues to percolate their inter-personal drama plotted over multiple novels. But the characters are fuller, more mature. All this is cast against the events of skeletal remains found on a remote ledge of the Shiprock formation in North West New Mexico and the unraveling mystery surrounding its identification and the ultimate solution of that year's-old mystery. A very enjoyable read.

Jewels says

I love how you can't keep Leaphorn from investigating even when he's retired! Chee needs to work on his romance skills, because the women he dates seem to always be running away. I think he could get more work done if he just stayed a bachelor or settled down once and for all. The story was complex and the characters wonderful as always. I liked the twist with the cattle rustler! On to the next.

Nicole says

This is going to be more about related issues than the actual book.

First of all, I sometimes have a tendency to avoid really popular or trendy books, books that might be sold in airports. At some point, after all the people raving about him, I told myself I needed to take a look at a Hillerman book, but it took me a long time to get around to it.

By all accounts, Tony Hillerman was a great guy. He had connections to my university, as well as two places I've worked. He spoke at a writer's conference I attended, and I've always kept in mind his advice for not falling prey to writer's block (though, clearly, it worked a lot better for him than it has for me; but that's my problem).

I'd watched and liked the PBS Mystery movies of *Coyote Waits* and *Skinwalkers*; so when I found this book on my mother's bookshelf, I figured I wouldn't be lost jumping in mid-series. And I was right--watching those TV movies gave me enough background information about the featured characters.

It took me too long to finish only because I designated it 'waiting room reading' and kept setting it aside for various other reasons.

So, about the book itself: I feel guilty about it, but I didn't love it. There were some good passages, sparingly-worded but really on-target descriptions of the environment, especially; and I enjoyed the mentions of New Mexico places and things. I enjoyed the tidbits about Navajo culture, some I was aware of and others I wasn't. But the dialogue and characterisation tended to be what you'd expect to get from strong, often silent types. Everything kept at arm's-length (or maybe even farther) in terms of emotion. I understand people who play it close to the vest, because I tend to be one; but I prefer more of a peek into characters' internal lives when I read a book.

Romansreturn says

For the first time I read an English story without searching every word on the internet. The story is clearly structured. The plot is quite easy to understand so I could imagine myself what words (which I did not understand as a Swiss student) meant.

I also enjoyed reading the book because it is written very excitingly and I was interested in the Navajo culture. Those parts, where Tony Hillerman wrote about the special environment in Navajo, I liked the most.

There were also parts where I did not like to read on. For example in the middle of the booklet, the story is quite too drawn-out. It needed a bit of patience but in the next chapters, there happened something interesting again. I liked the change of views respectively the mode how Hillerman described several plots paralelly.

My personal time-management was not the best because I had to read the book in three days so I could not really enjoy the whole thing. I would recommend the book for people who are interested in crime novels, different cultures and sometimes also a bit of irony and sarcasm.

Shannon says

I really like these stories and the settings. I don't quite get how they are true Chee and Leaphorn since they never seem to really work directly together but small complaint. It is nice that they don't blend their personal lives with their work lives. I do hope that Chee gives up on Janet...she seems a bit whiney to me and I simply hate when women try to make men something they are not. If she's that blind to how he is, then he's not for her. I'm sure they'll figure that one out shortly. This mystery was interesting and involved some rock climbers and greedy peeps looking to capitalize on a ranch. The end kind of reminded me a bit of the Inspector VanVeeteren mysteries that I also follow...things handled but not necessarily conventially.

Pop says

The Fallen Man is my favorite book so far in the Leaphorn and Chee saga's about crime on the Navajo Reservation. Some characters from prior novels appear endearing the Navajo way. I really enjoyed it. 4.5 stars.

Sunita says

3.5 stars rounded up.

Somehow I'd never managed to read any of Hillerman's Leaphorn and Chee novels, but this fit a challenge so I picked it up. It is set in Four Corners country and takes place right after Leaphorn has retired. He's pulled back in to privately investigate a cold case when a skeleton is found on a mountain. Meanwhile, Chee is Acting Lieutenant and is investigating the same case as well as cattle theft and a handful of lesser issues. Hillerman creates a rich portrait of Navajo society and the mystery is pretty good. Leaphorn and Chee are definitely characters to spend more time with.

Carmen says

They sat a while, engulfed by sunlight, cool air, and silence. A raven planed down from the rim, circled around a cottonwood, landed on a Russian olive across the canyon floor, and perched, waiting for them to die.

Another excellent mystery novel from Hillerman. I have been really enjoying these entries more than his very early ones.

There are two real cases here: the skeleton of a mountain climber is discovered in a crevice. And someone is rustling cattle in the area.

This mystery was one of the more exciting ones, with people getting shot at and some sweet justice.

...

Leaphorn is retired now.

What?

I know. I was very surprised.

And his girlfriend Louisa is not in the book at all. Never mentioned. Did they break up? Are they together? WTF is going on? We have no clue.

Even though Leaphorn is retired, he's still acting as a cop. Investigating crimes and interrogating people. I have no idea why he retired. It's like he's not even retired.

...

Oh, here's a real kettle of fish.

I HATE Janet Pete. This is the book that made me hate Janet Pete. She was driving me insane.

She makes cracks about Jim Chee working as a policeman, she doesn't like it:

"All you found were dry bones? Her husband must have been away a lot. I'll bet he was a policeman," she said, and laughed.

She wants him to quit being a policeman, get a desk job that's "higher-up" and move to the city.

Flashbacks of Mary Landon, anybody? How come Jim Chee is having such shit luck with women? They are all hellbent on changing him. It's sickening.

He was beginning to suspect that she didn't really want to marry him. Or, at least, he wasn't sure she was willing to marry Jim Chee as he currently existed - a just-plain cop and a genuine sheep-camp Navajo as opposed to a more romantic and politically correct Indigenous Person. Making it worse, he didn't know what the hell to do about it. Or whether he should do anything. It was a sad, sad situation.

When Chee is shot-up and in the hospital, Janet says:

"I hope this being almost killed will cure you of being a policeman."

o.O Wow. Fuck you, lady. FUCK YOU.

I couldn't BELIEVE how she was acting in this book. Not to mention her palling around with her asshole ex-boyfriend, apparently thinking that this was just fine, and that Chee either wouldn't find out about it or wouldn't care? WTF?

Also, it seemed as if she might have skipped one or two ethics classes in law school. She thinks it's perfectly fine for her to share cop information that Jim Chee tells her with the partners at the firm. So traitorous.

There were about 10,000 reasons I was angry with her. She was acting like a total brat. *shaking my head* I can't believe she went through all that, got to know Jim Chee so well (she's known him for 3 some years) and then just isn't happy with the (good) man he is. "Get a better job! Make more money! Leave the reservation and work in the city! Even though you hate the city!" WTF? I hate when people try to change their lover. Don't date a person and plan to marry him/her if you have "plans" for how he/she can be molded into your idea of perfection. It's sick and wrong.

Luckily Jim Chee is seeing this before he becomes legally bound to her.

Now. Is Jim Chee just a mensch and someone who is getting a free pass from me in this relationship?

NO. He has a huge inferiority complex. It's very weird.

That reminded Chee of the white Porsche that had zipped past him yesterday. Why did he connect it to Janet? Because it had class, and so did she. And was beautiful. And, sure, she'd like it. Who wouldn't? So why did he resent it? Was it because it was a part of the world she came from in which he would never be comfortable? Or understand? Maybe.

I can't handle this insecurity. It's very unattractive.

He's bending over to please her, but even he has limits to how far he'll bend. He took the lieutenant job solely to impress her.

He'd wanted the promotion to impress her, to make himself eligible, to narrow the gap between the child of the urban privileged class and the child of the isolated sheep camp. Thus he had made a thoroughly non-Navajo decision based on an utterly non-Navajo way of thinking.

But he won't agree to become FBI or move to the city. Thank heaven he put his foot down about this. A person has limits!

He was being racist. He had been thinking like a racist ever since he'd met Janet and fallen in love with her. He had been thinking that because her name was Pete, because her father was a Navajo, her blood somehow would have taught her the ways of the Dine' and made her one of them. But only your culture taught you values, and the culture that had formed Janet was blue-blooded, white, Ivy League, chic, irreligious, old-rich Maryland. And that made it just about as opposite as it could get from the traditional values of his people,

which made wealth a symbol of selfishness...

Meanwhile, Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn are... getting better at working together (I use this term loosely, Leaphorn is technically retired now) and trusting each other. But we still have not-a-friendship.

Chee laughed, but it was forced. He wasn't used to this strange new version of Leaphorn. This Leaphorn, come to ask him for something, hesitant and diffident, wasn't the Lieutenant Leaphorn he remembered with a mixture of puzzlement, irritation, and admiration. Seeing the man as a supplicant made him uneasy. He'd put a stop to that.

Chee still doesn't feel comfortable around Leaphorn.

Chee stifled a yawn. It had been a long and tiring day and this session with Leaphorn, helpful as it had been, didn't qualify as relaxation. He had accumulated too many memories of tense times trying to live up to the man's high expectations. It would be a while before he could relax in Leaphorn's presence. Maybe another twenty years would do it.

In fact, he doesn't think he really likes Leaphorn.

That thought surprised him. Why tell Leaphorn? The man was a civilian now. It was none of his business. He didn't exactly like Leaphorn. Or he hadn't thought he did. Was it respect? The man was smarter than anybody Chee had ever met. Damn sure smarter than Acting Lieutenant Jim Chee. And maybe that was why he didn't exactly like him.

But this is the first novel in which they actually have a functioning work relationship - perhaps Leaphorn retiring helped this? They communicate better (with some stutters, but still scads better than in earlier books) and share information.

Let's talk about ANOTHER new development in Chee's life: the bossy, tiny, beautiful Bernie who works for Chee and isn't good at following orders - she's a freelance wanna-be detective, just like Chee used to be.

All things considered, he liked her too. She was really smart, she was sweet to everybody around the office, and she was always using her days off to take care of an apparently inexhaustible supply of ailing and indigent kinfolks, which gave her a high score on the Navajo value scale.... No doubt about it, she really was an awfully pretty young woman.

She's smart, persistent and tenacious as a bulldog. She figures things out quickly - often even quicker than Chee can.

"Bernie," Chee said, "If my ribs weren't so sore, and it wasn't going to get me charged with sexual harassment and cause us to run off the road, I would reach over there and give you a huge congratulatory hug."

Bernie looked both pleased and embarrassed.

But the reason we REALLY know that Chee likes her romantically is

Chee became aware that he was showing off. And enjoying it.

I've read enough Hillerman to know what this means. Hillerman uses this to indicate a man has a romantic interest in a woman. Guaranteed tell.

The man who is involved with the cattle rustling is a pig. First tries to shame Jim Chee. That doesn't work, Jim Chee (to my intense delight) stands up to the fucker. THEN, the fucker makes sexual comments about Bernie in front of Jim Chee.

"Good looking lady, too. You give her my congratulations, will you. Tell her any old time she wants to work alongside of me, or under me either, she's more than welcome."

Does Jim Chee call this man on this shit? No, he does not. He doesn't say a fucking thing about him disrespecting Chee's coworker.

Then, much later in the book,

"He sort of made a move on me," she said. "Maybe not. Not exactly....Well, he gives you that 'doll' and 'cute' stuff, you know. Then he said how would I like to get assigned to work with him. But of course he said 'under' him. He said I could be Tonto to his Lone Ranger."

"Tonto?" Chee said. "Well, now. Here's what we do... we nail him. And when we do, you're the one who gets to put the handcuffs on him."

The ending to this is appropriately sweet revenge. Everyone likes to see a slimeball get his comeuppance, right? But I'm still a little sore at Jim Chee for not calling this character out for disrespecting a woman in front of him. It's easy to act like a man and stand up when the woman is right in front of you, much harder to do when it's just you and another male with no woman in sight.

Then again, as already established, I can't count on Chee to meet mensch-standards. He's a good man, but he's no mensch.

Leaphorn has mercy in this book. I won't tell you who he has mercy on or why, but just mentioning it so you know. Extra points to him.

Tl;dr - Solid, exciting mystery. Actually, two-for-one - there are two separate and unconnected mysteries in this novel.

While nothing seems to be happening romantically for Leaphorn (where did his girlfriend Louisa disappear to?), Chee's love life is exploding all over the place in various ways. I can't believe Janet turned out to be so vile. I'm extremely disappointed.

Carol says

How enjoyable it is to read one of my most favorite authors. It's been a long time since doing so. Tony

Hillerman when living was from Albuquerque, my local hero. A skeleton is found several hundred feet high up on a cliff where most people can't get to. Someone is rustling cattle. An old man is shot to death for no apparent reason. A lawyer firm has an interest in an old ranch. All these things have something in common, but what? Tony Hillerman has an excellent way of bringing several story plots into one conclusion. Using retired Leaphorn and Chee which has always been a good mix for me makes this a good read. Hundreds or thousands of devotees will cheer the return of Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee in Hillerman's most intricate and atmospheric novel yet. The Navajo policemen, whose exploits are now published in sixteen languages, are brought together by the death of a man on ShipRock, almost 1700 feet above the desert floor.

The fallen man had sprawled on the ledge under the peak of Ship Rock mountain for eleven years--visited only by the ravens who had picked his bones bare scattered his rock climbing gear. Through the memory of those who had known him, emerges an understanding of the fallen man, who had been given everything and found it was not enough.

The Fallen Man is replete with Hillerman trademarks--ingeniously intricate plotting, splendid evocations of the Southwest's harsh beauty, insights into a venerable culture, and subtly poignant characterizations.

Here in Albuquerque, we don't have the Local Bookstores and authors that come and demonstrate their works and talk about their works like I've heard happens in Scottsdale. Tony Hillerman did have a local visit and we could ask questions to him about his works. I asked him specifically if he saw himself as a Joe Leaphorn. I've always saw him that way. He's a very likable man. Feel's good to read my good friend again!!!

Morris Graham says

The "Fallen Man" has the recently retired LT Leaphorn and Acting LT Jim Chee working together on an old case that was never solved. The NTP find an old skeleton on a ledge and Leaphorn wonders if it is the old missing person case from long ago. Leaphorn is now a consultant for a Washington D.C. firm and hired by the missing man's family to find out what happened. Chee is struggling with his on again-off again romance with Janet Pete, the half-Navajo lawyer who wants to put a rope on Chee and make a white man out of him. We see the entrance of a new NTP cop, over-enthusiastic Officer Bernadette Manuelito. She's a traditional Navajo, smart and pretty, and she likes Chee. I "read" this as an audiobook, and Gil Silverbird does the voices very well. Chee is trying to solve why there is an increase in cattle rustling, and at the same time having this skeleton show up to worry about. The whodunit details are laid out before Leaphorn and Chee, in the cultural backdrop and beautiful but rugged land. The cultural differences between the Navajo and white man's worlds are highlighted here. I won't ruin the ending. Great Read!

Sep says

Jim Chee and the "legendary" Joe Leaphorn work together to solve the mystery of a missing mountain climber whose bones are discovered 10 or 11 years after his disappearance. On the romantic front Bernie Manueleto makes an early appearance while Janet Pete and Jim struggle to untangle themselves from an impossible relationship. The various Navaho characters are delightful as is the scenery especially Ship Rock.

Jim says

Tony Hillerman's 12 th book in series of Navajo mysteries, "The Fallen Man" again features Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee teaming up to solve a cold case. 11 years prior, inexperienced climber Harold Breedlove disappeared leaving his wife & brother in law to run his ranch. Amazingly one morning after 11 years a skeleton still dressed in climbing gear is found on rock ledge. The question of the exact date is of vital importance. Harold had to live to age 30 to receive his inheritance- Harold was 29, almost 30 when he vanished 11 years prior. Leaphorn now retired is working as a PI for the Breedlove family. Did Harold's wife, and brother do something funny to ensure they'd get inheritance ? Jim Chee now engaged to lawyer Janet Pete is having his own miseries. Chee must continually struggle with rookie officer Bernadette Manuelito. It's obvious to everyone but Chee that Bernadette has major crush on Jim. Another excellent read from Tony Hillerman that's enjoyable from first page to conclusion. Hillerman's colorful and unique characters continue to amaze with each passing page. It's really easy to root for Leaphorn and Chee even though they really don't get along too well. Another 5 stars out of 5 stars for "The Fallen Man", from Tony Hillerman. A true classic not to be missed.

Julie says

I truly enjoyed this book, and it is now one of my favorites in this series. Oftentimes, I listen to an audiobook while doing something else such as baking, walking the dog, cleaning, or just doing odd jobs while pottering about the house. However, time and again, I was so absorbed in this story, that I would stop and stay quite still, enrapt. The author has a wonderful way of setting the scene, so that you can see it clearly in your mind's eye, and you wait with baited breath for the next piece of action.

carol. says

Enjoyable. Good pace. Setting well integrated, which is one of Hillerman's strengths.

Polo says

This book has all of my favorite Navajo characters-- Chee, Leaphorn, Bernie, Largo. Great humor, multiple puzzles to solve, complexity and location, location. Canyon De Chelly and Shiprock areas are gorgeous landscapes for a mystery book. I loved it and laughed out loud a few times while reading this one. Good Navajo life lessons about living in harmony too.
