



## Coyote's Wife

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## **Coyote's Wife** Aimée Thurlo , David Thurlo

Ella Clah is no longer an unsure young woman recently returned to the Navajo Reservation from a stint with the FBI; she has found her place in her tribe, her clan, and her family. She has seen the Diné at their worst—and at their best—as they balance the modern era with the traditional Navajo way of life.

Ervin Benally, son-in-law of the powerful Navajo businesswoman and politician Abigail Yellowhair, plans to bring satellite telephone service to the Rez. When Benally is attacked and another man is killed, Yellowhair orders Navajo Police Special Investigator Ella Clah assigned to the case. Ella is determined to find out who is behind the attacks, which include elements of Navajo witchcraft.

*Coyote's Wife*, which introduces a new source of tension in Ella's personal life, will satisfy both the returning reader and those new to this series.

## **Coyote's Wife Details**

Date : Published September 30th 2008 by Forge Books

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Author : Aimée Thurlo , David Thurlo

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## **From Reader Review Coyote's Wife for online ebook**

### **Amy says**

Another good installment in the series. I enjoy series where the characters develop and change from book to book - and this is one of those. Fast paced with plot twists that caught me flat footed. A good weaving of traditional and modern Navaho culture in a mystery setting.

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### **Doris says**

Although I enjoyed this story, I felt that there were too many twists, too many possible outcomes, and too many romantic twists to make this a great read. Still, it fits in the series and is worth reading for continuity.

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### **Clare says**

So far, so good! I really enjoy this series...my only beef is that by the time the new ones come out, I've forgotten a lot of what went on in the earlier ones, so when the authors reference a past event, I'm racking my brain, trying to remember. Heroine is strong, smart, & doesn't take stupid risks. Very atmospheric.

Be warned...they mention a lot of meals, so if you're dieting, don't read this on an empty stomach or you'll be driving straight to the nearest Tex-Mex place!!!

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### **Victoria Moore says**

"Coyote's Wife" by Aimee and David Thurlo is a very well-written procedural police mystery with a compelling cast of characters and a beautiful New Mexico scenery that serves as one of its most interesting characters. Set on the reservation ("rez") called "Navajo Nation" it follows the case of main detective Ella Clah as she tries to figure out who's trying to sabotage "StarTalk," a phone service company that wants to put cellular towers on the reservation so that everyone there can have a more reliable form of communication. Straddling the world between traditional Navajo values and modern Anglo ones, Clah also balances her own ambitions as a policeman with her family and her relationships with her ex-husband Kevin Tolino and her new relationship with Reverend Bilford (Ford) Tome. Mix that in with murder, assault and vandalism against "StarTalk" owner Ervin Benally, and those surrounding him, and you have an unusual mystery that ends on a cliff hanger. In addition to the effective way the authors described the Navajo's customs, language and food you also get a sense of how difficult it was for the characters in the story to try and adapt to the universal threat of technology.

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### **Doug Clark says**

Coyote's Wife by Aimee and David Thurlo is the twelfth novel in their mystery series about Ella Clah, a

Navajo woman who is a Special Investigator for the Navajo Tribal Police. The Thurlos started the series with *Blackening Song* written in 1995, and have continued writing Ella Clah mysteries at a pace of about one a year. Since then, not only do they have the series featuring Ella Clah, but they have also written several novels in several other series. *Coyote's Wife* was originally published in 2008.

I first came to the Thurlos due to my impatience in waiting for another Tony Hillerman novel in his series about Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee. I had been introduced to Hillerman's novels around 1990 due to the recommendations of my mom and others. I loved those novels and literally absorbed them as soon as a new one was released. The arid beauty of the locales on the Navajo Reservation and the interaction between the Navajo culture and our culture was fascinating. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about the Dine'. I also found the mysteries interesting and enjoyable. In searching for something similar, I stumbled across the Thurlos in the late 90s with *Enemy Way* or *Shooting Chant*. I enjoyed them and found they were similar in tone. I tracked down the two prior novels and have tried to keep up with the series even since.

*Coyote's Wife* opens with Ella and her frequent partner and cousin, Justine, hiking in the Chuska Mountains in search of wood for Ella's mother's husband to carve into table lamps. On their way back, a bloodied man steps out in front of their pickup. After narrowly missing him, Ella and Justine find he has died due to a severe cut on his left arm. In investigating his death, Ella finds a chainsaw and three empty cans of beer near a tree. Initially thinking the death was accidental, further investigation reveals what seems to be a plot to stop the installation of cell phone towers on the Reservation. The target of repeated harassment, Ervin Benally, the face of Startalk, the company building the towers, was supposed to be with George Charley, the man who died. Benally is subject to several other incidents leading Ella to believe that he was the actual target, not Charley. Complicating matters is the introduction of a former police officer, Roxanne Dixon, who is pursuing Ella for the email address or phone number of Ella's former husband, Kevin, a lawyer now living in Washington DC. She claims she is seeing Kevin and threatens Ella. There is also the addition of Abigail Yellowhair, the powerful wife of deceased State Senator James Yellowhair (the subject of an earlier novel in the series) who is also the mother-in-law of Ervin Benally. During the course of the investigation, Ella must face down the vigilante traditionalist group known as the Fierce Ones and Navajo witches called skinwalkers. As events swirl out of control, Ella is forced to confront her own fears and beliefs. She succeeds largely with the help of her fellow investigators, Justine, Ralph Tache, Joe Neskahi, former officer and electronics expert, Bruce "Teeny" Little, and FBI agent, Dwayne Blalock. She is also assisted, particularly with the the skinwalkers, by her hataalii brother, Clifford. Eventually, Ella puts the clues together and solves the murder and the crimes that have accompanied it in its aftermath.

So, where does the title come from? A Navajo story told late in the novel provides the answer:

"Long ago, in the time of the beginning, there was a young woman who lived with her twelve brothers. The sister kept their house clean and made a good home for all of them. Then one day Coyote saw her and fell in love. He asked the young woman to marry him. Not really interested in marriage, she gave him a number of nearly impossible challenges to meet before she'd accept his proposal. She wasn't at all worried because she never thought he'd be able to complete them. But, as usual, Coyote cheated. He used magic and all kinds of tricks to accomplish the tasks.

"Though she hadn't seen that coming, the woman was bound by honor to keep her word, so she married old Trickster. As time passed, Coyote's wife slowly changed. She became more and more like Coyote, corrupted by the evil in him. She, too, started using magic and trickery to get whatever she wanted. She even learned how to change into a bear—which is how she got her name—Changing Bear Maiden. Before long, Coyote abandoned his wife and took off on more adventures of his own. The wife became bitter, and eventually began to plot against her brothers. She killed four of them before the fifth, in self-defense and

faced with no other choice, killed her. After she died, her head became Bear ears. That place is now a reminder to all that although good can overcome evil, it's often necessary to fight to restore the proper balance (pp. 285-6)."

This story is very relevant to the plot of the novel.

The novel was an enjoyable read as Ella Clah is an old friend. I always enjoy visiting her and her friends and fellow investigators. Her family life is an interesting one with her mother, Rose Destea, and Ella's daughter, Dawn. The exposition of Navajo culture and beliefs I find very informative and fascinating. How do the Thurlos' Ella Clah novel match up to Tony Hillerman's Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee novels? In terms of the knowledge of the Navajo culture and beliefs, I think they compare quite favorably. The level of research and information provided is very good. As for readability, I have to confess that I find Hillerman's novels easier to read. I can't say for certain why that is. Maybe Hillerman is just a better writer overall. However, having written that, I would still encourage anyone with a love of mysteries, and especially a fascination for the American Southwest and the Navajo tribe, to pick up one of the Thurlos' Ella Clah novels. You will most likely have to search to find them, and possibly special order them, as I rarely find any on the shelves of most bookstores. The Thurlos do have a new Ella Clah novel, *Ghost Medicine*, being released November 12, 2013. Also, as an additional note, Tony Hillerman's daughter, Anne Hillerman, has picked up the pen to continue the Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee series. She has written *Spider Woman's Daughter*, a novel featuring Bernadette Manuelito, Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee coming out on October 1, 2013.

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### **Bondama says**

I took this book from the Library because I was such a huge Tony Hillerman fan -- Biig Mistake!! All the color, the light, and the dignity of the Dine (Navajo) has been leached out by this couple's poor writing. Waste of time.

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### **Mike says**

I have enjoyed the series very much. I have read the series from the beginning and have watched the characters and author grow over time. I find it being a bit fantastic that all the lead law enforcement officers are women in the Special Service, but I do not find that it is any different than the liberties taken with most popular novels of this genre.

My only issue was that this particular book seemed a little rushed at the end. I have found this to be the case with other authors who do long running serials.

All in all, I recommend this book for an enjoyable light read, especially for fans of the series.

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### **Michael Starsheen says**

**Another great entry in this series**

I gave this book five stars because it was a good read. The series keeps getting better and better! I love the characters and their interplay, and the suspense of the series is excellent.

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### **Joe White says**

At the risk of hate mail, this was written by a woman, about women, for women. While it adopted the geography, people, and topics of Tony Hillerman's writing, it lacks the clarity and tone of his writing. Too many possible outcomes and villains were presented which affected various outcomes with the directed action not having a precise motivation and target combination. That aspect of the reading detracted from any given tension point reaching its potential climax. The leading characters seemed to continue business as usual, so I as a reader never felt an impending evil suspense build up to a confrontational finality of action.

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### **Michele bookloverforever says**

another Ella Clah mystery. somewhat noirish. wreathed in Navajo beliefs, customs and culture. Mayhem and murder. Strong female detective torn between modern living and traditional beliefs. Interesting.

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### **Elaine says**

Okay, I figured out how to edit my original review (see posting recent). Latest in a great series of Navajo Reservation genre books. Start at the beginning of the series, though, to learn the characters' lives up to now. Aimee and David Thurlo have done a great deal of research, depth of detail, and very unique story lines.

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### **Alice says**

This partnership is a fitting heir to Tony Hillerman's mantle. A great addition to my "read-em-all" list.

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### **Scilla says**

This is a Tony Hillerman copy - about the Navaho Tribal Police. Ella Clah has been in the FBI, and is back on the reservation as a Special Investigator. Ella and Justine are out in the forest when a bloody man dies in front of their car. It appears he may have cut himself with a chainsaw, but soon they realize there is more to the story. Ervin Benally, who is trying to bring cell service to the reservation, and who's truck the man was driving begins to have more accidents; someone is finding out information only the police should know, and soon it appears that skinwalkers are involved.

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### **Kathryn says**

I picked this up not knowing it was so far along in the series. Ella Clah now has a 9-year-old daughter ... she was nowhere near pregnant the last time I read a book in the series.

Getting tired of the constant conspiracy vein of the series. I may be wrong, but I cannot believe the Navajo people are this vindictive with one another. I loved Tony Hillerman's books much better.

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### **Rosie Beck says**

The 11th book with Ella Clah, Special Investigator in the Navajo Nation. Like Hillerman, with much information about Navajo ways (Dine) and how things are dealt with slightly differently on the Rez. Benally is trying to bring phone service to the entire nation, but his mother in law, Abigail Yellowhair, may want in on the money to be made.

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