

JESSICA DAVIS STEIN

A b o u t t h e B o o k

COYOTE DREAM

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- Featured Alternate Selection for Doubleday Book Club
- Featured Alternate Selection for Rhapsody Book Club

For Sarah Friedman - smart, sophisticated, urban woman - the chance to journey to the Southwest to buy American Indian art for her family's successful New York store comes at a time of personal transition. Determined to put aside romantic disappointments, she seeks new perspectives in the serenity of the vast desert landscape. Then her car breaks down on a remote part of the Navajo reservation and fast-paced Sarah finds herself stranded in a slow brown world.

After years of turmoil, Ben Lonefeather has finally gained control of his life. Aloof and tightly wound, he devotes his time to work and caring for the coyotes he rescued as pups. When Sarah Friedman shows up stranded he wants to get rid of her as quickly as possible, and only grudgingly offers help.

The intersection of two lives that would not ordinarily have crossed for more than a moment deepens into a connection that leaves both of them passionately alive and profoundly changed. Within a layered collision of social spheres, *Coyote Dream* explores the tension between society's surface and nature's undercurrent.



BIO

Jessica was born in Los Angeles and raised in Palm Springs, California. She graduated with a BA in Theatre Arts from UCLA and performed as an actress in LA for eight years before entering USC to earn a Master's Degree in counseling psychology. She worked for the LA Sheriff's Department and The Women's Clinic and then opened her own practice as a Family Therapist. She began writing seriously in 1997; *Coyote Dream* is her first published work- with the exception of a produced script for *Days of Our Lives*. She is married to director, Herb Stein; they have two grown children. Although she no longer maintains her therapy practice, she continues to volunteer as a Mental Health professional with the Red Cross.

FAQs

Q. Coyote Dream is your first novel. How long did it take you to write?

A. About seven years all told, although that wasn't working straight through. I wrote another novel and several short stories during the same time period. Now, I'm working on several ideas. I don't know how long it will take for me to get another novel ready for publication.

Q. How does your previous career as a family therapist affect your writing?

A. I've always had an avid interest in what makes people behave the way we do. I started as an actor, trying to figure out and act from the inside of a character. The study and practice of psychology was an extension of the same interest; and of course all of it informs my writing.

Q. What do you like to read?

A. I love both fiction and non-fiction. Non-fiction books I'd recommend today: *The Third Chimpanzee* and *The Beak of The Finch*. Fiction: *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Atonement* or, if you want some fun, *Bridget Jones*, *The Edge of Reason*.

Q. What do you do in your spare time?

A. I love hiking in the hills with friends and our dogs and grand-dogs: reading, talking long distance to my daughter, traveling, cooking (sometimes with both my children) and entertaining.

Q. What did you find most interesting about writing *Coyote Dream*?

A. The discovery of a perseverant streak I didn't know I had. An earlier incarnation of the book was picked up by a literary agent who sent it out only for it to come limping back, rejected resoundingly by at least twenty editors at different publishing houses, including the same publisher who ended up buying it. I kept working for four more years – reworked and re-wrote the book over and over until it was good enough to land a new agent - wonderful Robert Guinsler, who was responsible for selling it.

If the book had been published earlier it would have been a shame because it wasn't ready. I wouldn't have had the chance to make it the best it could be and couldn't have been nearly as proud of my work. For a long time I railed against the universe and felt miserable - especially after the first rejections, and also off and on through the years of hard work, because I lost faith. Then I decided getting published didn't matter, the important thing was the work itself (Although it always did matter, a little, but at least it was no longer the whole point.) To write this story as well as I could became my mantra. I felt better and the turning point came when I gave the manuscript to two young women (one, a child of old friends; the other, the special friend of a child of an old friend) both in publishing. I paid each a small sum to read it and give me notes. Both brilliant, with notes that were quite different, but not at war, they were also both extraordinarily supportive about the story, which I hadn't expected. They gave me back my faith that it could be sold. I worked for another year and it paid off.