



Land of Careful Shadows

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"A tremendous talent."--Lee Child

From award-winning author Suzanne Chazin comes a powerful novel of passion, bigotry, and murderous secrets in a homicide detective's picturesque hometown...

A body is found in a reservoir fifty miles north of New York City. The victim is young, female and Hispanic. In her purse, the police find a photograph of a baby they believe is her daughter--a little girl they can't identify. Or find. Where is the child? Is she still alive? And what is the meaning behind the disturbing note in the woman's bag? "Go back to your country. You don't belong here."

Arriving at the scene is homicide detective Jimmy Vega, who spent the better part of his childhood in the area and still carries the scars. A Latino himself, Vega knows all too well how hard it can be for an outsider to fit into a close-knit place like Lake Holly. Even now, as a respected officer of the law, he has to watch his step in an investigation simmering with ethnic animosities and steeped in local gossip. Both challenged and intrigued by Adele Figueroa--a passionate defender of immigrants' rights who reminds him uncomfortably of his own family's struggles--Vega must rethink everything he believes to uncover long-buried truths about his community, his loved ones . . . and himself.

Filled with drama, mystery and raw emotions, *Land of Careful Shadows* shines a nuanced and timely light on a small town's darkest secrets and deepest obsessions. It is not only a tour de force of literary suspense, but an intimate journey into the human heart.

Land of Careful Shadows Details

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From Reader Review *Land of Careful Shadows* for online ebook

Jo says

4.5 stars

I love books that entertain while making you think. I knew undocumented individuals had a hard time of it, and I always felt compassion for their plight. But now each one weighs on my heart. This book makes you think, it makes you feel. It is an appropriate read for anyone making decisions about DACA. Every congressman should be required to read it.

Joanne Garbato says

This mystery had me sucked in from the first page. Homicide detective Jimmy Vega is sent to Lake Holly, his hometown, to investigate the death of a Latino woman found in a reservoir. Her purse is found nearby with the photo of a woman and a baby in it...and also a note which reads "Go back to your country. You don't belong here." Lake Holly has a large population of undocumented immigrants looking for a better life. To many of the residents they are unwelcome and unwanted. Vega remembers the discrimination he experienced as a teenager in this town and has some unpleasant memories of his life there. Along with trying to solve the mystery of the dead woman's identity and who killed her the police must also locate the baby to make sure she is safe. This was a powerful story, full of drama and speaks to current issues. It is moving and involving with great characters and surprising twists. I really enjoyed it and recommend it.

Hallie says

I heard about *Land of Careful Shadows* because the author sent me a message, based on my having reviewed Julia Spencer-Fleming's books, being herself a fan, and having a very nice blurb from JS-F. (I know some people don't like this kind of authorial contact, but I was fine with it, especially as she was respectful and not at all pushy. It's got to be tough, and the reality is that a lot of authors have to do marketing themselves these days.)

Before I say anything else about it, this might not be the best book for someone who has strong feelings that undocumented workers in the US are all criminals or the like. Just for the record, I don't believe that, and FWIW, my beliefs were formed back in the time when I was living in the States. The girls' dad is Latino (both his grandfathers came from Mexico as young men) and I learned a lot about the issues from him and his family as well as from social justice groups, especially when we were living in Tucson.

That's not to suggest that I think this is a preachy book - but it is a book telling two stories, which has its drawbacks as well as advantages. From the series title, you'd expect this to be about Jimmy Vega, homicide detective, solving a murder while being distracted, or not, by romantic affairs. (Oh, okay, the latter only because the author mentioned in her email that there was "falling in love" and the blurb says Jimmy is "challenged and intrigued by Adele Figueroa", and we all know where that's likely to lead!) It is, of course, that story. However it's also the story of undocumented immigrants in a small town in New York state, and a fair amount of the POV scenes belong to Rodrigo, who is on his second stint in the US to support his wife and children back in Guatemala. *Both* of those stories are, as Julia Spencer-Fleming put it, "keenly moving

and suspenseful", but they don't play 100% well with each other.

Jimmy is a complex character, and he's caught in a number of conflicts - he'd experienced serious prejudice as a child and teen in the town to which he's now been sent to investigate, and still finds it today, but he's also viewed with distrust (and worse on occasion) by the Latino community in the town. His first love, Linda, has moved back to Lake Holly, and she - though Anglo as they come - is more involved in the community than he is. He's had to make a lot of compromises and has lost much of his feeling of belonging to his own culture, without ever being fully accepted in/by Anglo culture either. He's also in a difficult position in this investigation, as there are all kinds of problems in the town that the chief of police, Greco, wants to sit on, and his motivation may not be entirely that he's a racist jerk.

One of the strengths of the book is highlighting the fact that undocumented immigrants aren't one uniform group - in any way except for their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Rodrigo's journey from Guatemala certainly has elements which are all too commonly heard, but he's a very real character with a truly moving story. This is definitely good, but it does cause the sympathy I'd been feeling for Vega to falter and almost be lost completely at one point. No real spoilers here, and certainly nothing about the solution of the crime, but the truly averse might skip to the next paragraph. When Rodrigo becomes a suspect, we've been in his head enough to understand his motivation at running when a cop comes to pick him up. We don't know for sure whether or not he actually committed the crime, but we do see Vega's refusing to pay attention to the horrific experiences Rodrigo has in trying to get him to confess, except in the rather weak way they provide him motive for the killing. It comes very close to a feeling that Vega is so eager to get a confession that he wouldn't care too much about whether that confession was actually real. I found this incredibly upsetting - I wouldn't have been surprised if it had been any of the other cops by then, but Jimmy has to have enough integrity to be worth investing emotionally in. It pulled out of this low-point quite quickly, and I was back to feeling he was a good guy who's sometimes emotionally immature and sometimes a bit lazy, but interestingly rather than fatally flawed. In a nice parallel, the same kind of behaviour turned up again, when someone would have been quite happy to destroy Vega's career even knowing that he hadn't done something. (view spoiler)

Adele was great, and I'd have liked to see more of her, for a couple of reasons. One is that emotional immaturity Vega sometimes exhibits, which seems to leave him a bit inclined to mope over skinny Anglo women. And yes, they *are* all skinny, which is a slight problem. Twice in the book Latino guys admire Adele, who's beautiful and curvy and contrast her with Anglo (or Norte Americano, as Rodrigo calls them) women, who are too skinny and "dress just like their men". Body stereotyping is *still* a bad thing no matter how it's done. Anyway, it did make the romance between Adele and Jimmy seem slightly as if he hit rock-bottom and *then* turned to Adele, which isn't too likeable.

There was one point when I started wondering if the book had gone so far in the direction of developing sympathy for the Central American immigrants that it had turned into Anglo=bad, Latino=good. It's not, and having brought it up, I need to be very clear on that. What is the case is that those with more power are far too likely to exploit and abuse those with none, and while the undocumented workers are inevitably at the powerless end, the exploiters aren't necessarily Anglos. Adele's family's story being a tragic example of that.

Although *one* worst thing doesn't happen, some of the things that come to light as Jimmy eventually solves the crime are both heartbreaking and infuriatingly credible. I had no idea who the killer was until close to the end, and -- wow. (view spoiler) I did see another part of the mystery (view spoiler), but not in its entirety, and again, it was both shocking and sadly, not unbelievable.

I listened to this on audiobook, only because it's not out here any other way, and won't be in paperback until

mid-summer, but I was happy with that as it's very well read. The next Jimmy Vega book will be out this November, and it's already on my to-read list.

Amy says

Get ready for a great new mystery series! Suzanne Chazin introduces readers to homicide detective Jimmy Vega in her latest novel *Land of Careful Shadows*. In Lake Holly, fifty miles north of New York City, the very town where Vega spent the better part of his childhood, and where his ex-wife and daughter still live, a woman's body has been found in a reservoir. The victim is a young Hispanic woman and the recovery of her purse reveals a picture of her and a baby girl, possibly her daughter. A disturbing racially charged note is also found in her purse. Where is the child and is she alive? Is this a crime of passion or a hate crime? As a Latino himself, Vega knows how hard it can be to fit into the community but the influx of undocumented immigrants has further widened the divide of haves and have-nots in Lake Holly. Vega soon finds himself crossing paths with old acquaintances in unforeseen ways. He is also called upon to face hard truths about himself and his own family as he investigates the killing. Populated with well developed characters *Land of Careful Shadows* is more than just a police procedural. The keen insights into race relations, undocumented immigrants as well as Police relations with community members, makes this mystery a timely and important read. Readers will find themselves hoping to hear more from Chazin and her skillfully drawn detective Vega.

Eve says

A timely exploration of the immigration crisis in our country that moves beyond politics and borders to examine the impact on people's lives. Set in a small suburban town *LAND OF CAREFUL SHADOWS* highlights the discrepancy between the haves and have-nots and those who straddle the divide. Suzanne Chazin's characters are complex yet sympathetic. Her writing is engaging and provocative. Recommended!

Marleen says

Finding a new enjoyable author is like an unexpected gift. I totally love Suzanne Chazin's writing style, plotting and characterization. Tackling the subject of undocumented immigrants was also a surprise. This author did it with sensibility and understanding, giving dignity to all protagonists. I especially loved the character of Rodrigo, an honest and hard working immigrant from Guatemala, who gets caught up in this case. His thoughts on the world were humbling.

I think this story offered insights and an opportunity to give serious reflection to the issue of the undocumented, whether they are laborers, refugees, or other.

Here we find ourselves in a small, rather upscale town in Northern New York, where County detective, Jimmy Vega, is called in to investigate the murder of a Latino woman. It seems that the town is quite prejudiced against other cultures, especially Latino, and Jimmy Vega, being a second generation American from Puertorican descent, is also on the receiving end of their racial profiling. Even now, as a respected officer of the law, Vega has to watch his step in an investigation simmering with ethnic animosities and steeped in local gossip. Meeting Adele Figueroa--a passionate defender of immigrants' rights, Vega has to rethink some of his own beliefs and values.

I can't begin to tell how much I enjoyed this book – it's refreshing and original and I'm running off now to start the next one in the Jimmy Vega series. ****4,5****

Julie says

Land of Careful Shadows by Suzanne Chazin is a 2014 Kensington publication.

This first book in the Jimmy Vega series is quite impressive. Vega is a cop that can read between the lines and see the shades of gray between right and wrong, which leaves him as conflicted as those who are not in law enforcement, but he must do his duty, which is to uphold the law, no matter what.

When a young Hispanic woman is found dead, a picture in her purse of a child, sparks panic as the whereabouts of the child are unknown.

Vega, who is also Hispanic, understands the dilemma many immigrants face, but he must also follow the letter of the law, but when his investigation leads him to Adele Figueroa, a woman who champions the cause of immigrants, his enlightenment and belief system is put to the test.

This story highlights the many layers of immigration, the struggles ethnic groups cope with, as they attempt to build better lives for themselves, but also shows the many ways in which they are vulnerable to suspicions, bigotry, and how they are often taken advantage of.

Vega finds himself in between a rock and a hard place due to his sworn duty, but also because of his own heritage.

The mystery unveils the identity of the dead woman, and the mysterious way she died, and the whereabouts of the woman's child, which opens up a plethora of small town secrets and crimes, that will hit Vega where it hurts.

I thought the author did an amazing job with this novel. Vega is a complex character I hope to get to know better as this series progresses, and the issues addressed in the story are timely, presented in a realistic and thought provoking manner.

There is plenty of room for character development and growth, and the writing is stellar, so I am positive this series is going to become a strong, dependable, 'automatic buy' kind of thing for me. I can't wait to get started on the second installment!

4 stars

Licha says

This book was recommended to me by the author and although I was ready to dismiss it, I decided to give it a try instead. Am I glad I did. I loved this book. It's been a while since I've read a satisfying book like this.

The story centers around the investigation of an immigrant woman's body found dead in a reservoir.

Everyone has something to hide, something to protect, which is making it that much harder for Detective Jimmy Vega to complete his investigation. As if this weren't enough, the racial tensions in town are on an all time high. There is also at stake a child's life. A picture of the victim holding a young child was found next to the body and Vega wants to find out where this child is or what happened to her.

The book was suspenseful and once I locked myself away in my room I could not stop reading it until its conclusion. I liked the author's style of writing. The story was told from different points of views but it was all told in a linear timeline, where the story did not jump around from place to place. I was able to keep up with it and the investigation made sense to me as events unfolded. The author has written some memorable characters and I would love to see where she takes Detective Vega and company next.

As for the meat of the story, I just want to say that I was touched to tears a couple of times reading the immigrant's stories. I was especially touched by Rodrigo's journey, his struggle to survive in a country where a lot of people are not welcoming, where employers take advantage of his need to make some money, any money, just so he can send it back home to his family so that his kids can have a roof over their head and an education. He must suffer in silence and accept the abuses for fear of being reported to the authorities. From the start, we see how he has to make do with a boot that's completely falling apart. He tries to crazy glue it, then tie a string around it. That boot bothers me even now. It's the kind of stuff where sometimes you forget you're reading a book about a fictional character because I wanted so bad to give him a brand new pair of boots. This made me so very sad. Everything about Rodrigo made me sad, made me want to show him that there are people who care, people that see him as a human being. He talks about finding a little girl's necklace in the trash and how he had picked it out of the trash can so that when he returned back to his country he could give it to his youngest child. I could feel the love he had for his child in that one gesture.

I find it hard not to be touched by the plight of immigrants. All the things they must endure just to come to America to earn a little bit of money to send back to the families they leave behind. Some almost die crossing the desert or river to get here, risk rape, and are often extorted of thousands of dollars they don't have to begin with. The ones that do make it work so hard to earn very little, doing jobs that no one wants to do, back-breaking work and under conditions that no one should have to put up with. There is always a story to every immigrant and if people took a moment to consider this, maybe there would be more compassion towards a person who just wants to give his or her family a better life. Isn't that what we all want for our own families? We don't have to agree on the political aspects of it, but we can all stop to consider for a moment the struggle of each and every one of these people.

I am looking forward to more books by Chazin and to possible further books with Jimmy Vega as a continuing character. Thanks again to Chazin for recommending her book to me.

Carrie says

Detective Jimmy Vega finds himself investigating the case when a young, Hispanic woman is discovered at a reservoir north of New York City. Worrying detectives is the fact that the woman has a photo of a young child and this child is nowhere to be found. Along with the body is also a note that says "Go back to your country. You don't belong here."

Land of Careful Shadows is a book that is fitting the times and what is going on with current news with racial tensions and political topics. The story starts off with Jimmy himself being racially profiled even

though he is a homicide detective he finds himself still dealing with the stereotypes. The writing in this book was really good and the plot interesting but I still found myself at somewhat of a disconnect with this one.

The MC is Latino and he is investigating a Latino murder in an area with a lot of illegal immigrants that shy from the police from not wanting to be deported. But some characters still seem to block the police efforts even though Jimmy should be one of their own whether the characters were legal or not. That is kind of where my disconnect stemmed as I don't understand not helping to find a murderer and some of the things included I'm just not as familiar with when it comes to immigration etc.

I do still think that overall the author has made a good story here that sits well with current times that some people will love. There are of course twists and turns along the investigation to keep one guessing as to who is responsible and how it will turn out.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.wordpress....>

Petra says

So much more than 'just' a mystery! Land of Careful Shadows introduces homicide detective Jimmy Vega who returns to Lake Holly, a small town in NY state, where he spent a large part of his childhood to investigate the death of a young Hispanic woman who had a photo of a baby on her. Who is the woman? How did she die? And where is the child?

With his Puerto Rican roots, Vega is no stranger to prejudice. As a police detective, he is now also facing distrust from the large Latino community in the town, many of whom are undocumented. On top of that, he is trying to remain in his teenage daughter's life after his divorce.

The story doesn't just focus on Vega and the police investigation, though. At its heart, it provides a touching insight into the plight of undocumented immigrants.

It was really interesting to read about the racial tension that had been building over several months and the experience of the different characters, the documented immigrants, the undocumented ones, the families made up of different cultures, such as Vegas and his ex-wife.

You could tell the author is passionate about the subject, without being preachy or heavy on politics, and has researched her topic. Apart from being very topical and relevant, some of it was truly shocking and a real eye-opener. I admit I've learned a lot about immigration from this. But I also particularly enjoyed the way the author delved deeper and explored aspects of bi-cultural and bilingual identities.

The multi-layered mystery aspect of the story was done pretty well, too. Some parts of it were predictable, and I was starting to wonder how it could take Vega that long to catch up with facts that were presented to him early on. Other parts were quite surprising and twisted enough to keep me fully engaged throughout.

The one thing I found a little irritating was the fact that all white American females were described as skinny. Considering the author made a very valid point of emphasizing how diverse groups of people are

even if they share some commonalities this sort of stereotyping just didn't fit in.

Overall, though, this was a great story with some memorable characters and I intend to read the next books in this series.

Many thanks to Kensington Books who provided me with a copy via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Meredith says

4.5 stars

The Land of Careful Shadows is a politically charged mystery that emphasizes the complexities of immigration reform.

When Detective Jimmy Vega is called in to assist in the murder investigation of an undocumented immigrant in Lake Holly, New York, elements of his past come to the surface. Vega, who grew up in Lake Holly (but born in the Bronx) seemed to push his Puerto Rican culture to the side in order to fit in—he married (and eventually divorced) a white woman and did not teach his daughter, Joy, about being Puerto Rican or even speak Spanish to her. With the investigation fueling his feelings, Jimmy struggles throughout the novel to come to terms with his identity.

Vega works alongside Detective Lou Greco to solve the mystery behind the death of the undocumented woman. Spurred on by an illegal immigrant killing a white woman and her daughter in a DUI, Lake Holly is a town divided over immigration. Since this incident, undocumented immigrants are the targets of numerous hate crimes. Both Jimmy and Greco struggle with doing what is right vs. following the law—it becomes apparent that the two don't always go hand-in-hand.

The Land of Careful shadows is more than a mystery—it's a thought provoking commentary that shows that immigration reform isn't a black and white issue. Chazin reminds the reader that whether or not they are in agreement over immigration reform, those crossing the border are human beings.

I highly recommend will definitely be reading the other books in the series!

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley and Kensington Books in exchange for an honest review.

Linda says

"Today, with the sunlight streaming through the office, there were flecks of dark honey in the irises. She realized he was looking for an honest answer."

Homicide Detective Jimmy Vega is dogging an honest answer from all around, in and out, and up and down. When the body of an undocumented woman is found in a woody area of Lake Holly, New York, Jimmy, a Latino himself, is assigned the case. Although growing up in both Brooklyn and Lake Holly, Jimmy knows full-out how life works on both sides of the equation.

What intensifies the plot is a photo of the woman with a small girl on her lap. Who is this child and is she still alive? When a tiny shoe is found in the lake, the search is kicked into high gear. The innocent appear along with the not so innocent in this one. And who gets to determine which is which?

Suzanne Chazin presents a storyline that runs along the rails of today's headlines. You will read outloud from passages that may evoke some serious emotions. Chazin puts it all out there for you to muddle over.....the good, the bad, and the ugly on all sides. There's a lot of zigzag jelly between these slices of bread. Food for thought.

I started with Chazin's third book in this Jimmy Vega Series, *No Witness But the Moon*, and am now going back to the beginning. I assure you that we will be finding out more about Jimmy and his inner workings. This is a solid series and Chazin's characters have incredible depth and they also evoke the light of high interest. She's that good. You get the whole, piece-by-piece story with all the bells and whistles and she holds nothing back.

It is my hope that Suzanne Chazin is hovering over her next Jimmy Vega offering even as we speak. So looking forward to it, Chazin.

Joanne says

It is seldom that a thriller addresses current social issues with any validity, but this one, written in 2014, is weirdly prescient to one of the ugliest issues of the 2016 election: illegal immigration.

A young woman illegally in the country is found drowned in a lake in New York State. There is evidence to prove she didn't go into the lake willingly. Local police are caught in a conundrum. There are a lot of illegals in their town, and a lot of ill will towards them. It doesn't seem much of a stretch to suspect murder.

One of the detectives is Jimmy Vega, an Hispanic man born in the USA who grew up in this small town and experienced racism as a child. He is caught between these two worlds, a problem exacerbated by the fact his daughter is in love with an undocumented teenager.

The author is immensely skilled at portraying the depth of these characters' personalities. You empathize with the incredible struggle to survive that brings them to this town. You learn their backstories and begin to care about them.

I found the entire book heartbreaking, but I couldn't put it down. I'm really looking forward to reading volumes 2 & 3 of this series.

Jill says

A couple of mysteries rolled into one about a dead immigrant women found in a reservoir and her missing baby. Dectective Jimmy Vega is on the case and works hard to uphold justice and balance his relationship with the women in his life from his ex-wife and daughter to his first love and the lawyer working at the immigrant center. I was blindsided by the ending and can't wait to read the next book in the series.

Pamela says

LAND OF CAREFUL SHADOWS: more than just another murder-mystery with plenty of twists and turns

and an affable aptly-flawed protagonist; it's also a multifaceted humanistic story that will ruffle feathers and upset apple carts. Controversial, edgy, and contemporary – a plot that is timely and relevant, mirroring current events such as racial profiling, immigration issues, police/civilian relations, and hate crimes.

Chazin did an impressive job weaving together a multilayered crime amidst complex issues. Additionally, she created fully developed characters and dialogue that richly lifted off the page with authenticity. She brought main characters and their relationships to life with verve and clarity. The dynamics between Vega and his law enforcement partner and superiors were especially on-point.

Whether or not I liked all what was said and done, or the various political and/or personal ideologies, is somewhat moot. The story read and played out realistically.

“I didn't say life is fair . . . I said there's right and wrong. Just because it doesn't work perfectly doesn't make it any less true.”

As for other dynamics, Vega and his relationship with his daughter and ex-wife could have benefited with a bit more direct interaction and dialoguing for added depth; especially in relation to the ending. Even so, up until the wrap-up, after the gut-wrenching resolve, I was thinking to rate this five-stars. But then, unfortunately, gritty turned gooey. I'm just not a fan of perfectly packaged, glucose endings. It would have been a far stronger finale, in my opinion, if a few loose threads were left dangling.

Overall, after Chazin's hiatus from writing the fiercely-gritty Georgia Skeehan suspense-thrillers - *The Fourth Angel*, *Flashover*, and *Fireplay* - this is a darn good four-star read. Looking forward to more crime solving with detective Jimmy Vega.
