

COYOTE

TERROR AND PURSUIT ACROSS THE BORDER



A JADEANNE STONE MEXICO ADVENTURE

ANA MANWARING

COYOTE

Praise for Ana Manwaring's JadeAnne Stone Mexico Adventures

Nothing Comes After Z

Recipient of the Literary Titan Silver Award for Fiction 2022

Literary Titan Review

Nothing Comes After Z is a riveting crime thriller with a strong female protagonist. I appreciated the grounded nature of the crime and how it relates to some headlines we see in the news today. Before she can safely leave Mexico and return to her life, she has to uncover some hard truths and catch the perpetrators. I enjoyed how well the emotion is weaved into this action novel because it ensure we're invested in the protagonist and we're biting our nails when the action intensifies. Author Ana Manwaring knows how to create a storyline that easily sets up the hard-hitting action.

M.M. Chouinard, USA Today bestseller of the Jo Fournier Mystery series
“A well-written, engaging story with a bad-ass protagonist I loved spending time with. Bring on more JadeAnne!”

The Hydra Effect

Lisa Towles, Bestselling and multi-award-winning author of *Hot House*, *Ninety-Five*, *The Unseen* and *Choke*

“*The Hydra Effect* sizzles with action, tension, and peril. Great writing combined with regional flare and international intrigue make this sequel a delightful ride!”

Jan M Flynn, award winning author

“JadeAnne heads to Mexico City for a break from her partner and now ex-boyfriend. But her sharp intelligence, curiosity and inability to stay in her own lane land her in a snarl of trouble. In short order she's evading cartel thugs, uncovering a human trafficking network and confronting high-level Mexican politicians with questionable connections, all in a lushly realized setting one can just about smell. And taste—JadeAnne might be in the middle of a gunfight, but she's never immune to the temptation of a good plate of tacos al pastor. She and her loyal dog Pepper are a team you can't but cheer for.”

Set Up

Heather Haven, multi-award-winning author of the Alvarez Family Murder Mysteries

“This is a blowout of a story. It starts on the backroads of Mexico in the middle of the night—just a woman, a dog, and Mexican Banditos—and escalates from there. If you are looking for a fast-paced, action-filled thriller about the adventures of a young PI and her lethal but well-trained dog, this will be your cup of tea. Or should I say Margarita? Jack Reacher step aside. You have met your match in JadeAnne Stone.

Judy Penz Sheluk, Amazon international bestselling author

In her debut mystery novel, Author Ana Manwaring offers up more twists and turns than a Mexican rattlesnake. Fast paced, with well-crafted characters and a strong female lead, there's plenty to like about this world of power, politics, and Mexican money laundering. I especially enjoyed the strong sense of place, which Manwaring uses to great effect. Well worth adding to you TBR pile.

Kirkus Reviews

“With a likeable duo and a vivid, appealing setting, this adventure series is off to a promising start”

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Other Books in the JadeAnne Stone Mexico Adventures

Set Up (2018)

The Hydra Effect (2019)

Nothing Comes After Z (2022)

Coming 2023

Saints and Skeletons

A Memoir of Living in Mexico

To
Pattie Hogan

Thanks for the good times in Mexico City and down in Tepoztlán

Acknowledgements

My deep gratitude for the special folks whose support, consideration, care and hard work went into developing this series, especially to Lisa Towles for taking me in hand and showing me the writer's "ropes."

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Finally, a special shout out to my editor, Cindy Davis, The Fiction Doctor. You're curing me of all my bad writing habits. I can't imagine doing this without you.

As always, my deepest love and gratitude go to my husband David Prothero and our family for their love and encouragement.

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COYOTE

Pursuit and Terror Across the Border



A JadeAnne Stone
Mexico Adventure

ANA MANWARING



INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE, LLC

Chapter 1



Two Funerals, No Wedding

Saturday, September 8, 2007

Dylan and I beelined to La Iglesia de San Juan Bautista for another funeral. This time, Senator Aguirre and his mother, Lidia Sotomayor Buendía, had been murdered—and the killer was after me, too. I kept my hand on my gun and a sharp eye on the weekenders milling about the plaza.

I pulled my stylish bulletproof jacket tighter around my torso as we rushed through the carved doors. Dark-suited men with bulges under their jackets, wires curling into their collars, watched the mourners from positions around the church. Security detail to protect me and the fifteen-year-old girl I'd rescued from sex traffickers. I prayed they could keep us safe.

The senator's assistant Susana, met us as she scurried along the main aisle. "Hi JadeAnne. Dylan. I'm so glad you're here." She taped a spray of fresh black roses mixed with purple and white calla lilies over the end of the front pew. She carried half a dozen more silk ribboned bouquets for the pews reserved for family and close friends. Thank God for Susana Arias de Barrera. Everything looked lovely, organized, and well protected. If ever there were a fairy godmother to wave a wand to get things done, she was it.

"I'm ready to help. What shall I do?" I shouted over the organist's rehearsal.

"Take the stack of programs and put them in the pews."

I nodded and picked up the half-fold stack with a picture of the senator and his mother on the front and their dates of birth and death inscribed in gold. Susana hadn't spared any expense. But why would she, I wondered, neatly placing ten per row then

zigging around to the next row and zagging to the following. Still raw memories from the last funeral dogged me. I gulped a lung full of sanctified air and counted out another ten programs then zigged into the next pew deep in thought and careened into a mourner.

“Whoa, there, girl! Let me help with that.”

Dylan! My heart fluttered as he gave me a quick kiss. I gladly handed over half the pile. He started down the left side of the church, winding between pews and kissing me in the aisle as our paths crossed.

Yep, a totally different experience than my last Coyoacán funeral. I was pretty sure the luncheon afterwards would be a lot more fun, too. I only had one concern—my would-be kidnapper and boyfriend mistake—Anibal. Hence the bullet-proof couture.

So far he had not turned up or been apprehended, although half of Mexican law enforcement was looking for him. According to my dad, Quint, the cartels were paying the other half of Mexican law enforcement to protect him. Until he was safely extradited back to the U.S. I wouldn't let down my guard. Anibal Aguirre was not selling me to Los Zetas.

I stooped for a fallen program and surreptitiously scanned the mourners trickling in for suspicious bulges and ugly tattoos. If they were there, I didn't see them. Susanna had hired a platoon of security, which she'd posted around the plaza and church; hopefully, the bad guys would be kept out or nabbed by one of the men inside.

I'd learned exactly how the cartels worked this past week. With the aid and abet of politicians, bureaucrats, and law enforcement—they were getting wealthy off organized crime. It went all the way into the presidential palace, Los Pinos. At least that's what Polo's bodyguard, Horacio, said. I caught his eye and gave a little wave before sliding another ten programs along a gleaming pew.

Horacio predicted a major war over territory between the different crime groups, especially in the states along the border, the *plazas*. He advised me to watch which cartels were taken out. His prediction: Mexico's president would pave the road with Sinaloa's gold and welcome in El Chapo.

The idea fuddled my brain. I shook my head, dropped the last program, and headed toward the front of the church, keeping watch on the people coming in. I didn't want any surprises. The organist

had run through her repertoire and was talking with Susana. I recognized Loli Buendía hustling two giant urns of flowers at either side of the steps to the altar. The caskets, not open, thank God, shrank with all the stars, horseshoes, and crosses of flowers surrounding them. Arrangements crowded the floor in front the coffins, and sprays had been draped across Lidia's stark white lid and Polo's shiny black lacquer cover. The cloying scent of hothouse flowers was irritating my sinuses. I sneezed. Dylan handed me his handkerchief.

"You keep popping up from nowhere. Did you finish?" He held up his palms. Finished or ran out of programs. I went on, "Meet Loli, Lidia's great-niece. Loli!" I called and waggled fingers.

She beamed and came over.

"It's so nice to see you again, Loli." I took her hand and held it for a beat. "I'm sorry for your loss, and to be meeting under such sad circumstances—again."

The twinkle in her eyes faded. "Oh, JadeAnne, it's hard to believe. Three of my family gone in a month. Aunt Lidia and I didn't see eye-to-eye on many things, but I'm sorry she's passed. It's Polo—" A little sob caught in her throat. "Polo and I were always friends. I don't know how I'll make it through his service. Do you know what happened?"

I knew. The last funeral flashed through my mind—my client's husband shooting her to protect his cartel money laundering. Now this poor family would lay to rest Aunt Lidia, shot protecting her son from the Zeta trafficker I'd been sold to. My stomach churned, a fan of blades whirling.

Loli didn't wait for my answer. "Have you seen Anibal?"

I grimaced, my gut clenching, and raised my eyebrows at Dylan. Ignoring the question, I said, "Loli, let me introduce you to my friend, Dr. Dylan Porras. Dylan, Loli Buendía."

He poured on the Dylan charm, taking her hand and looking into her eyes. "Please accept my deepest sympathy. If there's anything I can do to help you through this rough time, please call. JadeAnne knows how to reach me." Was Loli batting her eyelashes at him?

"Thank you so much, Doctor. I'll see you later at the meal?" She *was* batting her eyelashes at him.

From behind us I heard someone calling, "Loli, *ay*, Loli.

¡Hola!” We turned to see the fat whore Consuelo García, madam of Lidia’s “gentlemen’s clubs.” barreling up the aisle. Wasn’t she in jail? As usual she looked like a brass fireplug teetering on stilettos.

Loli groaned, “Oh, no!” under her breath, gave us a shaky smile and turned tail. Quint intercepted Consuelo as she tried to squeeze into the front pew with Senator Aguirre’s relatives. He steered her away from the flower marked rows, depositing her about a third of the way back with some suspicious looking men.

The ushers, Loli’s boys, Polo’s butler Chucho, and a couple of young cousins I found out later, escorted mourners to the appropriate rows. Chucho smiled at me as he guided two of Lidia’s little crows to the front left pew, like a falconer—one on each arm. I hoped I wouldn’t be putting up with them again at the meal.

Oh, yeah, I hadn’t eaten the meal at the last funeral. Anibal had dragged me out of the party to avoid one of the traffickers he’d swindled. If Ani showed up, I might shoot him.

Chucho seated me in the third row on the right. The family was bigger than I thought. Some of these folks must be Aguirres from Polo’s dad’s side. They weren’t as well dressed as the rest of the bunch, but Lidia had to be *tía* to most of the people in the second row.

The organist glided in, black robes swirling, and began a hushed version of *O God Our Help In Ages Past*. I craned around again, looking for my men. Dylan thumped down next to me. Our housekeeper Señora Pérez on his arm, was decked out in a black dress, hat, and veil straight from 1950. She dragged a reluctant teen behind her. Poor Lily, trafficked from L.A. to Mexico City, unable to return home for bureaucratic idiocy, and now our housekeeper had her dressed in a dowdy, ill-fitting, black polyester sheath and patent flats. Insult after injury. I gave her a sympathetic smile.

Mrs. P nodded to me with watery, red-rimmed eyes. She actually cared for Lidia.

“Where’s Quint?” I whispered to Dylan. He shrugged. I shifted forward and twisted toward the back again, scanning the crowd for my father. “Holy sh—” Dylan dug me in the ribs with his elbow. “Spirit,” I finished, lowering my voice. “Turn around, Dyl. It’s Lobo.” I jerked my head.

“I’ve never seen him.”

“I can’t believe that scum showed up. He was the one who

actually drugged and transported Lily across the border. He knew we'd be here," I whispered.

Dylan shrugged. Mourners still streamed to seats. I stiffened as I recognized a couple of Lidia's associates. Cartel people. I bumped shoulders with Dylan and jerked my head toward the cluster of arrivals with a *why did the guards let them in?* look.

Ignore them, he mouthed.

The music shifted to *It is Well with My Soul*. I was becoming an expert in funeral hymns. The church hushed, the ushers came forward and took their places as a cellist and a singer joined the organist. The singer's rich tenor filled the church. I'd always loved this hymn.

Finally Quint scooched in next to me from the arcade. I leaned against him and breathed, "Lobo." He nodded and put his finger to his lips. I burned to know how it could be.

The service dragged on as I'd learned was the culture here, and the really good music was a pleasant surprise. Something outside of tradition I guessed. My stomach growled, but as I'd seen before—long lines of mourners, some I recognized, most I didn't, filed past the coffins to leave mementos and flowers with lots of crying. I wasn't going anywhere soon.

Everyone got up for communion, including Dylan. I spaced out with the music, keeping an eye on the faces passing. I nudged Quint and jerked my chin toward Senator Bendicias. Now why would he come to the funeral of a cartel woman he claimed he wanted to arrest—or the colleague he had betrayed?

Dad squeezed my hand. I realized he was as alert to the goings-on as I. Perhaps more so. He knew the players.

The stream of dirges and mourners finally ended; the family cried and hugged, cracked a joke or two, and invited everyone from the front rows back to Lidia's for lunch. I greeted Polo's brother and sister-in-law. Beto looked pretty broken up. This family's ties ran deep, and he'd buried his oldest daughter Lura, the woman I'd come to Mexico to find, thirty days earlier. I was glad wife Molly and daughter Alex fluttered around with kisses and kindness. Molly dealt with all the condolences; Alex held them both together with hugs. I started toward Dylan and Quint, waiting for me at the pew. That's when I saw Consuelo, charging toward the immediate family. Lidia's whorehouse employees had their

own pew—in the back. Shouldn't she sit with them? She was the madam, after all.

I headed her off. "Well, well, look who's here. Consuelo, I heard you were in jail." Too bad they let you out, I wanted to say.

"It's you again. I should have known you'd push your way into this poor family's grief." She shot me one of her mincing looks.

I minced right back. "Funny, I was going to say the same of you. I think it's better if you don't bother the Aguirres, Consuelo. What are you up to now that your houses are closed?"

"That's for me to know," she said, twirled on her toes and teetered off in her too-tight skirt and too-high heels, her rear jiggling like an uncoupled caboose. I imagined her hiding behind a pillar to find out where we were all going.

The family started its procession up the aisle toward the door, and yep, sure enough, Consuelo popped out from behind a pillar. Luckily Alex's husband cut her off, and the Aguirre and Buendía clans escaped to their waiting cars. I watched Consuelo latch onto Guillermo Lobo's arm. I grabbed Lily and Mrs. P, and hustled our group out the door.

"Where'd you park, Dad? Follow us. Dyl got directions from Loli. The cemetery is kind of hard to find."

He pointed across the plaza in the direction of Xicoténcatl. I pronounced it for him. "Yep, that's the one. Where are you?"

I pointed towards Calle Felipe Carillo. "Over there on the left."
"I'll pull around. Wait for me."

Dylan nodded and clapped Quint on the back. My, weren't they getting chummy. I felt little warmth spread through me and surveyed the pretty park full of Sunday strollers and our security. I saw the balloon clown and Archangel Gabriel was still doing his statue thing, and hopefully not blowing his horn. I didn't want any of the recently deceased climbing out of their graves—or not getting in.

I surveilled the plaza as Quint herded Lily toward the street, Horacio following, head swiveling side to side. Mrs. P dabbed at her eyes and scurried after them. Was she aware of the danger? I guessed neither of us wanted to run into Anibal, but I didn't see any of the cartel people. The legions of security must be keeping them at bay. Anibal had threatened to kidnap me to sell to Los

Zetas—after he tortured my dog while I watched. My gut clenched but I willed myself to relax.

“Dyl, let’s cruise the plaza. Maybe the fortune teller is here. Last time she stopped the reading, packed up, and left when she flipped up the body stuck with ten swords in its back.” I tugged on his sleeve.

“Sure, why not. It’s going to take Quint at least fifteen minutes to get around to us.”

“Probably twenty. Look at the traffic.” I pointed across the plaza to a snarl of cars.

“Jade, you don’t really believe that tarot mumbo-jumbo do you?”

I giggled. “You obviously aren’t from California.”

We strolled arm-in-arm, trailed by two security guards. I noticed the white-clad ice cream man and headed over for coconut ice cream, the guards a step behind me. As I carried the paper cups to the bench, I heard the throaty-voiced gypsy calling her trade. “*Vengan ustedes, tengo sus futuros.*”

“It’s her. Come on, let’s do it,” I insisted, pulling him off the bench, and handing over the ice cream.

“*Buenas tardes, señora. Queremos nuestros futuras, por favor.*” I slapped a twenty note onto her table and we made ourselves comfortable in her folding chairs.

She barely looked up from the cards as she shuffled, pulled the King of Hearts, placed it onto the table, and nodded. With a smile, she laid the Queen of Hearts next to him. “*Ustedes, anamoratos.*” She crossed the card with the Page of Swords and nodded again. “A young person, a girl, with a problem to solve. It will be delayed by—” she dealt the next card, the 5 of Wands. “Conflict. You will have to overcome this—” she said, and pulled the King of Pentacles. “He is a powerful and greedy man with many tentacles.”

“Could it be a group rather than a person?” I asked in Spanish, flashing on the Zetas.

She pulled the Knight of Swords. “Possibly, and its leader is ruthless, impetuous. Gets what he wants. It will be a very destructive group that acts fast. Your success will depend on your planning. You must be ready. If not, this could be your outcome.” She pulled the ten of Swords again and looked up at me. “You!” she spat out, scooped up the cards and shuffled her deck, turning

her back on us. But not before whisking the twenty *peso* bill into her pocket.

Dylan laughed. “What a load of crap.” He took my hand as we walked off, but I felt chills run up and down my spine.

“Dyl, I’m not so sure. I got the King of Hearts and the Ten of Swords last time too. How do you explain that?”

“You’re proving your Californian citizenship—the land of fruits and nuts. Coincidence.” He pulled me in close and gave my ribs a poke. I squealed. “My little nut job is ticklish!” He poked me again. I spun away from him laughing, and dropped my ice cream. I had come face-to-face with Anibal. And he didn’t look happy.

“Run, Dyl!” I shouted and took off, Dylan on my heels, aiming for the traffic cop stopping cars for the pedestrians.

We dashed to the street, our security guards pounding after us, and jaywalked through the stopped cars to the yellow Beemer Dylan’s friend, Dafne Olabarrietta, loaned him. Nothing noticeable about *this* car in a city of black cars. Horacio pulled the limo up behind us and beeped. We squealed out and headed toward the *panteon*.

Anibal shot me a middle finger salute as we rolled by.

About Ana Manwaring



Ana Manwaring is the award winning author of the JadeAnne Stone Mexico Adventures and three volumes of poetry as well as many essays, short stories and flash memoirs.

Ana teaches creative writing and autobiographical writing in California's wine country. She is the founder of JAM Manuscript Consulting where she coaches writers, assists in developing projects and copyedits.

When Ana isn't helping other writers, she posts book reviews and tips on writing craft and the business of writing at [www.anamanwaring.com/blogs/Building a Better Story](http://www.anamanwaring.com/blogs/Building%20a%20Better%20Story), and produces the FUNdaMentalists, a monthly poetry event.

She's branded cattle in Hollister, lived on houseboats, consulted brujos, visited every California mission, worked for a PI, swum with dolphins, and out-run gun totin' maniacs on lonely Mexican highways—the inspiration for The JadeAnne Stone Mexico Adventures. Read about her transformative experiences living in Mexico at www.saintsandSkeletons.com.

With a B.A. in English and Education and an M.A. in Linguistics, Ana is finally able to answer her mother's question, "What are you planning to do with that expensive education?" Be a paperback writer.

If you had as much fun reading *Nothing Comes After Z* as I did writing it, please consider going to your favorite online bookseller and leaving a review. Reviews help authors continue to write their books for your enjoyment.

To find out about new books and upcoming events, please take a moment to sign up on my mailing list at
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