



Jack!

Tova Dian Dean

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Life is pretty simple in the town of Foison Surrounded, a tiny bygone desert mining town in California whose total population needle comes to rest at just a couple dozen or so. Its current claim to fame is an unusual rock formation known as the Numinous Vortex, a questionable source of healing and renewal that calls to the occasional tourist. It is a place where expectations for Jack are low and he meets them—but just barely—so that he remains under the radar of his small town’s inhabitants. The only true contemporary and friend he has is Evonal, the orphaned daughter of rich, eccentric artists, who calls Foison Surrounded home and has since she was a child. They grew up together, and that relationship will come in awfully handy when Jack discovers an enormous cache of gold. When Jack inadvertently plants noxious seeds, a strange plant grows overnight. Its fruit proves irresistible and some of the residents immediately distill it into wine. Soon enough word about the delectable offering spreads and in combination with the Numinous Vortex’s already nominal luring power, Foison Surrounded quickly becomes a hotbed for tourist activity. The sudden influx of economic opportunities, however, threatens to overrun the residents, many of whom live there for the isolation and peace. As the situation deteriorates and neighbor is pitted against neighbor while gold fever consumes Jack and his life, he finds himself in an unlikely predicament: reclaim the quiet life he once had and in so doing reclaim his self, or hoard his golden nuggets...alone.

Jack! Details

Date : Published October 17th 2013 by CreateSpace

ISBN : 9781490338323

Author : Tova Dian Dean

Format : Paperback 406 pages

Genre :

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From Reader Review Jack! for online ebook

Georgiann Hennelly says

Foison Surrounded is a small town tucked in the desert of California. It is famous for its unusual rock formations known as the Numinous Vortex. A bygone mining town only a few dozen eccentrics- including Jack live there. He has lived there his entire life, and if he had his way he would spend the rest of his life living quietly with Evonel the orphaned daughter of wealthy eccentric artists. But then he discovers Gold. When he accidentally plants some noxious seed, a strange plant grows producing an irresistible fruit, that some residents make into wine. Word spreads quickly and soon the magical fruit, the wine and the numinous vortex create a 21st century spirituality that increases the town's tourism and economy. But it also threatens the residents who live there for the peace, quiet and isolation. Soon neighbor is pitted against neighbor and Jack's life is consumed with Gold Fever. He has to decide will he go back to his old life or hoard his Gold alone. A beautifully written very descriptive tale. Of what happens when you suddenly become Rich.

Marge says

It was an easy book to read. I found a few errors in the timelines and omissions but that is editing. Family secrets aren't always a good idea.

Maureen says

This was a modern day telling of Jack and the Beanstalk, and that in itself made me want to see exactly how the author went about that task. There were times when I wanted to shake Jack into action, yet at other times I really cared about how his life would work out. I loved that he cared for 'The big yellow dog' but again, felt annoyed that his actions were somewhat slow in dealing with her situation. However, after all the ups and downs, I did end up having something of a soft spot for him, so all in all I found it an interesting read.

Sarah-Jayne Briggs says

(I received this book for free as part of Goodreads First Reads giveaways).

(This review may contain spoilers).

This book was quite an interesting read, but I can't say for certain if I liked it or not. My six-year-old niece saw the cover of this and asked me what I was reading. I told her it was a modern-day story of Jack and the Beanstalk, but I don't think that completely covers what the book is about.

The characters in the book were interesting. I liked Jack to a certain extent, though it took me a little while to fully connect with him. The gold fever was interesting, though I was under the impression that gold was poisonous to consume - and Jack kept eating nuggets without any obvious ill effects.

I did keep getting confused between Linda and Astrid. I spent a lot of the book thinking that Jack was sleeping with one of them, when he was actually sleeping with the other. I liked and felt sorry for the yellow dog, though I did notice a few moments when she was called 'he' (or 'it') instead of 'she'.

The tie-ins with the fairy story of Jack and the Beanstalk worked pretty well, though I'm still not sure exactly where the plant came from. A lot of the book was quite well-written and I was able to see a lot of the events happening in my mind, but I did notice some errors through the book.

The use of obsession with the gold dust worked quite well, but it seemed to be solved pretty fast, rather than Jack having to deal with the after-effects of handling and dealing with his addiction.

The book was a pretty entertaining read with interesting characters. I'm glad I was able to give it a try.

Marie (UK) says

What a novel idea - a rewrite of Jack and the Beanstalk, brought up to date. The characters bounce off the page. I particularly loved the descriptions of his mother's moods. "quiet frenzy mode". The imagery is really good and I feel there is a moral to the tale. A really enjoyable read
