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A Silent Ocean Away
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Q: What is the significance of the title *A Silent Ocean Away*?

A: Ocean conveys the image of vast distance. An ocean separates the members of the Duvoisin family, both literally and figuratively. Chapter One opens with this imagery. The Duvoisins' secrets and troubles are further compounded by silence: their refusal and failure to speak to one another truthfully, to attempt to reconcile before it is too late. The reader should identify the oceans of silence shared between key figures in the story.

Q: How has Charmaine created an ocean of silence between herself and her past? Can anyone truly escape one's past? How has Charmaine's past influenced her ability to love and trust in the present?

A: Clearly, Charmaine attempts to suppress her past, fearful of the impact it will have on her future. The simplest way to do this is to hold silent. Yet the suppression itself magnifies the blemish and gives credence to her unfounded guilt. Until Charmaine embraces her past and accepts it, it is destined to

haunt her, and yes, influence her ability to love and trust in the present. Paul's very analysis: The woman in her demanded passion, the little girl, safety, and then there was the female her father had fashioned, the one who screamed: Every man must be avoided at all costs. But as George Richards says: We all have secrets we'd prefer to keep. No one is perfect. We all have a past and it does influence who we are. The question is: Do we use it to grow or regress?

Q: How has Colette contributed to the legacy of silence in this family?

A: Colette is the focal point of the silence. In her memories, the reader glimpses her uncertain relationship with Frederic. She is a young wife and mother unable to speak of her physical and emotional needs. This leads to infidelity and more silence, which drives portions of the story not yet revealed.

Q: *A Silent Ocean Away* is only the first of the Colette Trilogy. What should the readers be paying attention to or looking for in Book 2, *Decision and Destiny*?

A: Readers should be looking for the answers to such questions as: Why is John an outcast in his own family, yet the heir apparent? Why did Colette write to him? What are Agatha's motives? Why does Frederic look at John's return as a day for which he had been afraid to hope—a day for which he was unprepared? If Paul and John are bitter rivals, why does Paul admit to respecting John? To what extent is John responsible for his father's incapacitated condition? What role will Charmaine play in the turmoil? And, how do the children fit in?

Readers should also realize the Colette Trilogy is a trilogy on several levels, many symbolic. In Books 2 and 3 the reader should be looking for sets of three, whether companion scenes or items. For example: there are three important piano encounters, three significant letters, three plaintive departures, three joyous returns, and so forth. As the reader begins Book 3, he/she should be looking for those triads. The number three is symbolic in and of itself.

Q: You mentioned symbolism. Have you employed any other literary devices such as foreshadow in your novels?

A: Absolutely. Some are obvious, others unapparent until the trilogy is read in its entirety and perhaps reread. For example, Charmaine's thoughts concerning John: John! How I hate that name! Or when first they meet and Yvette's assurance that her negative opinion will someday change: The child had never been more wrong in her life. She'd sooner declare her father a man of God. As for symbolism: take note of Frederic's cane, John's cap, Pierre's stuffed lamb,

Q: Colette's death is tragic for nearly every member of the Duvoisin family. Was this difficult to write? Might it have been averted?

A: Tears were shed during the writing of Colette's death. As a writer, you walk in your characters' shoes, so experiencing Colette's death as the children or Frederic did was emotional. However, Colette's death is a turning point in the story and essential to the plot. Life is not always happy; a plausible story mirrors life and transcends time. There is also a message to be found in Colette's words: I won't be without you. I'll always be here . . . in this house . . . with you. The reader should also ponder to what extent Colette yielded herself to death, and why she did this.

Q: How did you choose the name Duvoisin? Is this significant?

A: The Duvoisin family is French, so naturally choosing a French name was critical. Duvoisin translates to: Of the neighbor—an important theme in the sequel we have planned. Other names were also selected for a reason. Colette means Reigns Victorious. Pierre, or mon caillou as his mother calls him, means rock or pebble, and this is symbolic. Charmaine's name has its own mysterious roots.

Q: Is writing historical fiction difficult? How much time was dedicated to detail?

A: The fiction is easy, especially if you have a lively imagination and enjoy writing. Researching traditional history is also easy. Understanding the nuances of the day—what was and wasn't invented, what the people ate, their manner of speech, how they dressed—is more difficult, but imperative if a writer desires credibility. In addition, the growing of tobacco and sugarcane had to be researched.

Q: What was the inspiration for this novel? Are any of the characters based upon people you know?

A: The inspiration was multilayered, influenced by a love of historical fiction. Add to that a lively imagination, self-confidence in writing, and a desire to write as a hobby. That hobby took on a life of its own and eventually grew into a passionate obsession.

As for the characters, most writers draw upon personality traits they observe in people they know. Some of our characters, such as John Ryan, embody such traits. The characters themselves, however, are fictional, their story original.

Q: *A Silent Ocean Away* is a coauthored work that reads seamlessly. How was this accomplished?

A: First- draft scenes and sections were composed individually, and our personal writing styles were clearly evident. The arduous editing that took place once we decided to self- publish had the greatest impact on "blending" our writing styles. With each reading of the work—possibly fifty in all—we imposed our own technique upon the other, until it was one work, not two.