

Wynne Leon (00:01)
Hi Deborah!

Deborah Brasket (00:02)
Hi Wynne, Hi Vicki.

Wynne Leon (00:03)
Vicki and

I are so excited to talk with you because you have another book coming out, your release of *This Sea Within*, which is your second novel released within just nine months of your first novel, *When Things Go Missing*. So can you give us an elevator pitch for *This Sea Within*?

Deborah Brasket (00:22)
Yeah, well, *This Sea Within*

First of all, it's a historical novel. It's set in Central America in the 1970s during a revolution. It's a political thriller. It's a coming of age story. And it's also a love story. And it's about Lena Landon. She's a surfer and a anti-war activist in California who travels to San Balanque, which is her

Wynne Leon (00:40)
Hmm.

Deborah Brasket (00:52)
Mother's homeland to learn more about her Maya heritage. And while she's there she goes with a journalist to interview the Aguilaros which are the group of

Wynne Leon (00:53)
Mm-hmm.

Deborah Brasket (01:05)
rebels who are set upon deposing the corrupt dictator, the US-backed dictator of that country. But when she meets Raoul, which is the charismatic leader of this revolution, she's strongly attracted to him and him to her, and she ends up joining them and ~ fighting for their cause as a journalist.

and a, but it's difficult for her because she has this transformation from an anti-war activist to a freedom fighter and she has to, you know, confront the harsh realities of guerrilla warfare and so there's a moral dilemma going on there.

And then at the same time, she has this dangerous secret. Her mother, which is a renowned artist in San Balanque is married to the enemy, to the vice president of this

corrupt dictator they want to overthrow. And so as the revolution intensifies, she has to choose or decide how much she's willing to sacrifice for love and for a cause worth dying for.

Wynne Leon (02:11)

So good. I mean you set up that political thriller, that coming of age story so so well as well as the love story. But you know taking a second to step back, how do you manage so much productivity in your writing?

Deborah Brasket (02:26)

Well, actually, I would not have been able to publish this book nine months after the other one, except that this book was actually already written before I even published the other one. It was written and it had been professionally edited. And so it was kind of just sitting there ready to go. I wrote.

Wynne Leon (02:44)

yeah.

Deborah Brasket (02:45)

when things go missing first, so I wanted to get it published first, but I had this other one I had been working on kind of just sitting there waiting to go. And that's the only way I could get this done in nine months, you know. The next book is going to take much longer than that to get it to the shelf. So that was it.

Wynne Leon (02:55)

Yeah, right.

Yeah.

How nice to already have that, you know, already going and, you know, you can almost keep the marketing engines and all that other promotional stuff that is so hard to do with books. you, you, you, you've got it all. Yeah.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (03:15)

Yeah.

Deborah Brasket (03:15)

It is.

I'm looking forward to when the book is released. And of the promotions and everything will continue, but having time to work on that second book. You know, I kept thinking even while I was in the publishing process of for the first book that I would have time to be working on the second book. And there's just been no time at all to work on the second book. So, you know, we'll come up later.

Wynne Leon (03:25)

Mm-hmm.

Right, right. And if I remember

from our last podcast, you kind of time segment your calendar for writing and promotion. Is that right?

Deborah Brasket (03:50)

I did, but it's kind of getting all mixed up now. Basically, I just try to put in, I probably average about five hours per day.

Wynne Leon (03:55)

Hahaha

Deborah Brasket (04:01)

So I just try to have a notebook I track my hours and I do try to you know put you know This is for promotion. This is for community building. This is for writing for and also for my my blog, you know posting on my blog so I kind of Do that so at the end of the week I can see how much time I put into each thing, you know, but it's just for my own amusement, you know Separate it that way because it's all about

Wynne Leon (04:28)

Yeah.

Deborah Brasket (04:31)

about books, promoting my books. It's about writing and I continue my writing while I'm with my blogging too.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (04:38)

One of the things that I, and readers will love this book, I love.

how you addressed in the end notes, how you did the research, which to Wynn's point is a whole other category when you're working on something or editing and refining. But you weren't an expert about guerrilla warfare. And in your sailing travels around the world, you saw some of the contentiousness in parts of the world that you traveled to and your inability to get to port sometimes because of conflict occurring and that danger.

So you had that personal experience and exposure, but I think it was just such a treat to read something where you could tell the author really took the time to understand the nature of conflict in the jungle and what the conditions were like.

the things that I learned, you know, by granted, it's, historical fiction, but what it must have been like in other places that aren't fictitious, you know, for people to live, survive, fight for what's right. There's so much of that, that comes through, but that some of that was from your personal experience. And, and I think you wrote to your husband as a Vietnam veteran, you know, being able to be a really wonderful coach and guide to you about

Deborah Brasket (05:49)

Yes.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (05:54)

weaponry even. does your husband Dale feel like he got due credit for what he added into the mix?

Deborah Brasket (06:02)

I think so. think so. was kind of fun that he was my resource that I would come to when I had these different questions because, you know, he was fighting in the, well, not in the 70s. He was back in the 70s, but in the 60s in Vietnam as a Marine. And he was a machine gunnist and he was in the jungle and, you know, he was...

there, you know, crossing streams and, you know, doing all of these things and seeing the horror, you know, of war. And also seeing, you know, of course, he was not a guerrilla fighter, but he was fighting against the guerrillas there. So he knew something about that, too.

But yeah, I read Che Guevara's book on guerrilla warfare, you know, and it just talks about, you know, what they were doing and how they did it in Cuba, actually. So that was very interesting. then I also read a memoir by this poet.

think her name was Gia Conde Belli. It was a memoir that she wrote as a Sandinista in Nicaragua in the, I think it was in the 60s and the 70s when they were trying to overthrow Somoza. It was another corrupt US-backed dictator there. so those were very interesting. And then I read another one about a journalist who was writing about the Nicaragua War.

And so all of those things helped me to get a better feel for it because I wanted it to be, I wanted it to be real, you know, even though it is a made up country, San Balanque, because I didn't want it to be the Sandinista War, you know. So I created this fictional country and.

Central America, kind of between Nicaragua and Honduras, and I tucked it in there and stuff. But we traveled all through, you know, Central America. So I knew, you know, what the landscape was like and what the people were like and the cities and the towns and that type of thing. yeah.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (07:53)

comes through and I know you said that this the sea within might be the first in a trilogy right so you you feel two more books coming.

Deborah Brasket (08:01)

Yes, yes.

It is. And I wanted to write it as a standalone.

So that, we could market it as such and that people could read it and hopefully feel satisfied by the time they get to the end of it. But yet maybe have a little tickle there that there could be something else, you know, coming your way if you're interested. And but in, from the beginning I did see it as a trilogy of three books and I have written some scenes from book two and book three as I was writing book one. Ideas would come to

and I just sit down there and write scenes and little sketches and things like that. So I do have some folders with material that I'll be using as I get better into it.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (08:48)

so cool, Wynn. I love that she's dropping little threads out there for later. That's so cool.

Wynne Leon (08:56)

That is wonderful.

So Deborah, you write blogs as well as these books. So I want to refer to a post that you wrote called, Speaking of Erotica, How I Came to Write This Sea Within. And you describe some of the impetus of the book being writing the book that you want to read. And you said this is what inspired you to write, and I'm going to quote from the blog, a story that

explores both the sensual and spiritual nature of desire, arousal, and consummation. A journey that involves deep longing for something beyond the individual self, that requires trust and receptivity, surrender and self-sacrifice, tenderness and devotion, that gives way to passion and delight, awe and wonder, ecstasy and bliss, love and transcendence.

So can you say more about how you see our sensual and spiritual journeys as intertwined?

Deborah Brasket (09:50)

Yes, well I see both of them as a strong deep-seated desire for the other, for the beloved, for something beyond ourself, a higher purpose or a higher power. And we see that in the sexual act, this craving for intimacy and ecstasy that can grow into love and commitment and go beyond that.

So that's kind of how I see them intertwined, but you know, it has to do with the seeding of the universe, you know, the birds and the bees, this craving for the other, for that kind of intimacy and connection that makes the world go round, so to speak. And... ~

Wynne Leon (10:37)

All

Deborah Brasket (10:39)

As I was thinking about this, I was wondering if it'd be okay for me to read something from the book because it shows, in fact, the book starts off with the first few paragraphs with Lena's deep connection with the ocean, with that sense of power and beauty and, and

Wynne Leon (10:47)

Cheers!

Mm-hmm.

Deborah Brasket (11:01)

You know, so many of us have that kind of connection with the ocean and with nature, with something higher than ourselves, further than ourselves. And this kind of sets up really the whole book and the intertwining of the sensual and the spiritual, I think.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (11:17)

And if

I can just interject one of the things before you do that, Deborah, that I so love one of your early reviews referred to your writing about connection and the world that you invite the reader into is having a cinematic quality and

boy, what you're about to read, the opening of the book, it surely does that. And so folks will hear that as you read that portion because it really pulls you in. You see it, you feel it. So I thought that was terrific praise. ~ But a cinematic quality will be shocked if this doesn't turn into a film on a screen somewhere. But yeah.

Deborah Brasket (11:48)

Thank you

I appreciate that. chapter one. Lena feels him before she sees him. The slow roll of the wave's hip rising behind her, towering over her, propelling her forward. Heart pounding, she paddles furiously to keep him within her grasp, then pops up in a low crouch on her surfboard, arms wide as she pulls in and out of the wave.

He's everywhere, everything at once now, beneath her, above her, around her. Wave, body, board, all one slow motion as his arms wrap around her. She slips into the shimmering

blue grotto of his body, thrilling at the sight. Her fingers trailing his trembling flesh. He melts at her touch.

She shivers with delight while dancing in and out of his reach and dissolving into one liquid moment of bliss. When the ride ends and wave, body, board separate into their several selves, Lena kicks her board around and paddles out to start over.

Some see the ocean as a feminine presence, but Lena never has. How could she? All that power and restless energy, the sheer weight and bulk of it, something in the sea's dark hypnotic presence, its great heaving muscles and ceaseless motion calls to her, calls to her restless yearning, a heated passion stirring just below the surface of her skin. And...

Turns out as the novel progresses, we realize that this is what she's looking for, that kind of connection with the other, with a beloved, with whatever romantic partner she ends up with. But it also has to do with her passion and her deep desire to unite with a higher cause.

one point in the book we learn that her father, is a history professor and a philosophy professor, takes her into his classroom and she learns about the history of the United States and how it's one long

lesson of commitment to the ideals of democracy and is full of self-sacrifice and civil disobedience to make that happen. And she loves that. She wants to follow in her father's footsteps. He's an activist and she wants to be an activist. So she gets involved in anti-war protests and she writes articles for her local newspaper about the plight of the low-wage

workers who fueled the city of Santa Barbara, which is a very rich city, but they can't afford to live there. And she wants to make that kind of difference with her life. And it's one of the reasons why she travels to San Balanque to learn more about her roots, because she hasn't decided...

what cause she's going to unite herself with. And of course she finds it when she meets Raoul and discovers what he's trying to do in saving his people and overthrowing this dictator. And she wants to be part of that. so yeah, I think that.

That quest for the greater good is part of that whole sensual and spiritual quest to do good in the world and to unite with something higher than ourselves.

Wynne Leon (15:06)
Right.

And I love that you say that and that passage that you read, you weave that surfing the waves theme all the way through the book and even in the in the back blurb. She came to find herself. She stayed to fight a revolution. Some waves you can't outrun. So good.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (15:29)

So good.

Deborah Brasket (15:31)

That's right. That's right. Yeah.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (15:32)

So good. Yeah, because she wasn't, you know, and we've all read books where there's a, you know, during a time of conflict, there's a heroine in the United States that flees, you know, and that there's a lot of privilege, perhaps, but she's, she's less running away from but running toward what matters most and the all that metaphoric quality about water and purpose and

Wynne Leon (15:32)

So, yeah.

Mm-hmm.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (15:57)

and then her eventual relationship with Raoul. It's all right there in those very first pages, you know, about what will keep her in motion, literally, because she's driven by something much bigger than herself that she's in tune with. And gosh, doesn't everyone want that?

Deborah Brasket (16:05)

Now, here it is.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, she talks, you know, quite often about how this great wave has come behind her and is pushing her forward into it. First, she knows not what, you know, but she's going to go with that wave. This revolution, wherever it takes her, whether to success or failure, you don't know what's going to happen.

Wynne Leon (16:14)

Mm-hmm.

Deborah Brasket (16:38)

And part of what ~ underlies this novel too is this whole idea of the sea as a metaphor for history, for this cyclical nature of history, you know. And like the sea is this constant battle with the land. And sometimes it can be just gorgeous and smooth and wonderful. you know, we're sitting there sunning ourselves and playing in the waves. And then other times it can come in and, you know, knock out a whole house.

and boulders and break down the land and history is like that too. It constantly, you know, there's a cyclical nature of peace and plunder, plunder and peace that kind of is...

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (17:19)
the importance of

preserving tradition and she's seeking some of that, you know, because of her mother's story, something that she feels she's been cut out of, you know, wanting to know more. Yeah, there and there. So there's all of that. But then there's the on the edge of our seat thriller aspect too, because there is danger in the things you know, she's very brave, but we won't give too much away. But Lena puts herself in harm's way.

And I would never have any clue how to write some of the scenes that you did that were so compelling and so real and so raw about the danger in being a rebel and being devoted, the personal risk.

Deborah Brasket (18:06)

That all came from research because I've never been in that position myself either, you know, and I certainly would never have been as brave as Lena, you know, even traveling alone to this country, you know, is something that, you know, I hate to admit, I probably would feel very uncomfortable with, but I know when you travel all over the place, you know, by yourself and you do these things, you know, so.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (18:11)
Yeah.

Wynne Leon (18:32)
it

Deborah Brasket (18:35)
Lena is actually more like you than me.

Wynne Leon (18:38)
Well, I've

never been a freedom fighter. Let's just be clear about that. But, but you know, all the, all the, I love all the sea metaphors because of all of your experience at sea. mean, you, you sailed around the world. You were lived on a boat for six years, right? So there's a good dose of adventure.

Deborah Brasket (18:52)
Yeah, yeah.

Yes, yes, that was a highlight of our lives, I think. We talk about that trip all the time and I think it really, I mean, I've always had that deep connection with the ocean and the sailing.

That was another deep connection with nature and wanting to be part of it, wanting to live on it, live off the ocean. ~

Wynne Leon (19:05)
Mm-hmm.

Right.

Deborah Brasket (19:18)
was also kind of a sensual and spiritual, you know, journey that we took when we did that, I think.

Wynne Leon (19:25)
Yeah.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (19:26)
Could you

talk a little bit about all of that related to, you're also an artist at heart, know, a beautiful writer and author, but love for you to show listeners, you'll have to like go and take a peek at the post and the photos, but could you show the cover and talk about how important it was for you to find an artist who could create the cover for the Sea Within that really

was evocative of all the things that you've been talking about because it really is, it's truly lovely.

Deborah Brasket (19:58)
Well, here it is. Yes, yes, this was so important to me to get the cover just right and to find a professional who could do it for me because while I'm an amateur artist, I play at art and I love art and...

You know, I couldn't create anything like this on my own. But yes, I asked him to bring in the Mayan aspects and the jungle and the beauty, you know. And then this, I wanted a young woman with a profile and her hair going back like the sea waves. And then we had to bring in Raul.

This little soldier, yes, holding his gun. you missed that. my gosh.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (20:39)
I that. okay. I did. I did.

I just thought it was part of her hair. I didn't look closely enough. Now I see. very cool.

Deborah Brasket (20:48)

Yeah,

yeah. So it brings in that danger and ~ also at the bottom you can see a machine gun and you also see this ~ sea serpent because ~ one of the other things that is central to this novel is this Mayan origin story that I wrote based on real

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (20:57)

Yes.

Yeah.

Deborah Brasket (21:12)

mythology stories, but I made it up to fit my story and everything. it's also about how these twin gods

created San Blancay and then sacrificed their lives to save it when this demon sea god tried to destroy it. they kind of, Raoul and Lena, whose actual name, she was actually named for this goddess, Malinka, and...

So that's part of their story as revolutionaries to say that they are going to save San Blanca from this demon sea god, which is the dictator. And that's how they carry their story to the people to help win the hearts and minds of the people. Because that is the origin story for San Blanca. So it's very important to the people there. And when they can kind of tap into that,

Wynne Leon (21:53)

Mm. Mm.

Deborah Brasket (22:09)

has time that taps into their revolutionary spirit and helps them to want to help them fight and overthrow this dictator.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (22:16)

so beautifully done because

it read, know, when and I both think that it read as if you were talking about an actual place and, you know, thousands of years of history and culture. But I think that's a testament to your ability to create this world and then, you know, undergird it with all of that depth and history and culture and not just name these things, but also create that resonance. It's a

Wynne Leon (22:20)

Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (22:42)

that was part of the story in such a compelling way. It felt very real.

Wynne Leon (22:48)

True, and just so much beautiful artistry on so many levels. The cover, the writing, the research and history, well done, Deborah. We really enjoyed this book. So thank you for spending the time to come on and talk with us about it. We're just delighted to see another book from you.

Deborah Brasket (22:58)

Thank you, I appreciate that.

Well, I'm delighted to be here and to talk with both of you. And thank you so much for having me. Thanks.

Wynne Leon (23:11)

Thank you.

Dr. Victoria Atkinson (23:12)

Congratulations.