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The Book Of What Remains



Synopsis

“To write well about your life, you need to have a life worth writing about. On that score, Saenz hits pay dirt.”

Booklist “A former Catholic priest, this poet creates prayerful verse that is at once mystical and utterly human.”

The Washington Post Poet, novelist, and popular YA writer Benjamin Alire Saenz writes to the core truth of life’s ever-shifting memories. Set along the Mexican border, the contrast between the desert’s austere beauty and the brutality of border politics mirrors humanity’s capacity for both generosity and cruelty. In his numbered series “Meditation on Living in the Desert,” Saenz turns to memory, heritage, and a host of literary progenitors as he directly confronts matters of faith, civil rights, and contemporary politics “always with the unrelenting moral urge to speak truth and do something.”

I am looking at a book of photographs. The photographs document the exodus of Mexicans crossing the desert. I am staring at the face of a woman who is more a girl than a woman. She is handing her documents to a government official. I know and you know and we all know that the documents are forged. The official is not in the photograph. Only the frightened eyes of a girl.

A former Catholic priest who worked with Mother Teresa, Benjamin Alire Saenz has published five books of poetry, four novels, a collection of short stories, and two bilingual children’s books. He received the American Book Award and teaches in the bilingual MFA program at University of Texas, El Paso.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mr. Saenz never ceases to amaze me with his immense amount of talent. And this blunt-force collection of poetry is no exception to this rule. From one of contemporary Latino writing’s most

Renaissance men (he writes fiction, young adult novels, short stories, poetry, and children's books, as well as paints) we are given a book of poetry that makes most modern day poets look stoic. Here is the El Paso in which Saenz lives--partially as you would expect it to be portrayed since it is a stone's throw from the tumultuous Juarez, a city of mass murders, unfathomable gang violence, and lawlessness--nestled in the desert and fighting for its life. No, fighting for its soul. And in the midst of all the well-known and lesser-known political and personal turmoil, Saenz turns the mirror on himself and dissects his own relationship with the land, with his identity, with his failed marriage and his sometimes troubling friendships. It's his honesty that hurts most, when the reader realizes that we are rarely honest with others, let alone ourselves. Such is not the case with this glorious collection. Each poem is a gift--often steeped in tragedy but redeemed by Saenz's unending well of optimism. We are blessed to have such an honest soul among us. Buy this for yourself and savor every word. Buy it for someone you love. Buy it for someone you've hurt. Most of all, buy it for someone who hurt you, and experience the catharsis that is Benjamin Alire Saenz's breathtaking poetry.

This is the best poetry book I have read in a very long time. It is poetry at its best: deep, human, and full of surprises. It is poetry doing its job!

He has now become one of my favorite authors- I normally don't like poetry, but his writing is so powerful and wonderful- it has changed my attitude.

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