



The Mermaid and the Drunks

Ben Richards

Download now

Read Online →

The Mermaid and the Drunks

Ben Richards

The Mermaid and the Drunks Ben Richards

This title is a poetic meditation on exile and return as well as a love story and a political thriller.

The Mermaid and the Drunks Details

Date : Published 2004 by Phoenix House

ISBN : 9780753817759

Author : Ben Richards

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Politics

 [Download The Mermaid and the Drunks ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Mermaid and the Drunks ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Mermaid and the Drunks Ben Richards

From Reader Review The Mermaid and the Drunks for online ebook

Kristin says

A glimpse into the life of a woman who grew up in Britain after her parents escaped Chile in the midst of a political uprising. Fresia's father dies, and she decides to return to her home-country to discover more about herself, her culture, and the political issues Chileans face every day. This book would have been an easier read if I had a background in Chilean politics or Spanish.

Pauline Armstrong says

For me, Chile was - far and away - the biggest character in the book. The book took a while to get into and I was nicely diverted by the need to research some aspect of Chile's history, geography or culture every ten pages or so. By the end of the book, though, it was just aggravating. I was glad when it ended and, to my mind, that is not the sign of a good book!

Layan says

This book was a disappointment. It started and ended without anything developing or changing - except it being crammed with dry historical details. It was loaded with names of places and people I'd never heard of. It went super slow and included unnecessary descriptions of scenery and actions. The author couldn't decide what to write about so he included all...: travel journal, a lot of history, love story, a political thriller and a crime drama. But at the end it left me feeling empty

Ria says

A book full of mystery, intrigue and the edge of a political thriller.

When Fresia decides to take a trip to Chile after her father's death to discover her heritage and roots she doesn't bank on an adventure.

On the plane she meets a university lecturer named Joe, this chance meeting leads to other encounters and the pair end up friends but when she meets up with the wealthy Roberto who is searching for his missing nephew she is pulled into the criminal and political underbelly of modern Chile.

Caught up in a love triangle with Roberto and Joe and engaged on a frantic search to find Roberto's nephew Pablo things get dangerous and both Fresia and her extended circle of friends are in extreme danger.

Poetic, lyrical and written with great style this is many genres rolled into one, mystery, political thriller and even to a certain extent a love story this was a wonderful read that kept you guessing throughout the novel.

A wonderful read.

John says

In the 1990s I spent a little more than a week in Chile, working in a poor barrio in Santiago. This book evoked many memories of that visit – the barrio where everyone had been opposed to the dictatorship, a wedding where I was innocently chatting to a middle-class woman about the ‘dictatorship’ when she cut me off, saying loudly ‘Dictatorship! Here there was no dictatorship, just firm government!’ I found myself taken back 20 years to that period when Chile was no longer under Pinochet’s heel but still had a politically uncertain future and the anger of the middle classes was still apparent (like that of the stern woman who put me in my place – I was too off-guard and my Spanish wasn’t good enough to make an adequate retort).

Ben Richards clearly knows more than me about Chile, and he skilfully puts himself in the shoes of his two main characters, Fresia and Joe, who are both travellers from England, seeing the country as knowledgeable, but at times uncertain, outsiders. Through Joe we learn about Chile’s complex history and especially its struggle for independence from Spain and the fate of indigenous peoples such as the Mapuche. Through the eyes of both we travel through Santiago and then (with Fresia) to the south: a geography lesson and history lesson combined.

But Richards is also skilled at developing plausible characters. Fresia and Joe, in different ways torn between being in Britain and longing to be in Chile; Magdalena and her friends who are determinedly exposing those guilty of crimes under Pinochet; Roberto the wealthy intellectual living a European lifestyle up in the mountains on the fringe of Santiago. They are entwined in a complex story which shows how powerful those who supported the dictatorship still were, and that while the mass arrests had finished there was a constant risk of casual violence and even death, at the hands of those still accustomed to using its brutality. But there is also space for protest, celebration and love.

Richards captures what for him (and to a much less developed extent, for me) is the strange pull of a beautiful, unique country, which is at once a ridiculously thin and improbably lengthy territory hemmed between mountains and the ocean, and a place where people fought and struggled for a different future, first against the Spanish in the war of independence, and again in the early 1970s in defence of the Allende government. They were beaten back but have survived to struggle again.

Ape says

My bookcrossing review from 2008

This has been sitting by the computer for almost a year. I have picked it up a few times, thought about reading it, but for some reason it just looked boring and unappealing. Anyway, I have finally read it! And it wasn’t boring or unappealing either which is always good.

It’s a really well written book set in Chile. The way the guy describes the story against the backdrop of Chile - the different towns, the people, the culture - you do end up feeling like you have really experienced the country, and it does make you want to go and visit the place, even though it doesn’t always come across as the safest place in the world!

It follows a group of people, Chilliens, a daughter of Chillien exiles who grew up in the UK but is just moving back to Chile, and a Scottish academic who is crazy about Chile and living in Santiago for a while whilst he writes his book (also on Chile). They get involved with a family whose young teenage son has disappeared in suspicious circumstances, and as they learn more about that, they understand that although the old regimes and Pinochet have gone, things are still not as fair and wonderful as people might hope.

It was a good read and I did enjoy it but I found the ending lacking somehow. I don't necessarily need a book to neatly tie up everything at the end, but this was just so... I can't even think of a good word to describe it, but it was a little disappointing in that respect.

Tony says

It's not often I read a book from cover to cover in a single day (it's not often I get the chance!) but this one had me hooked from start to finish. It's a love story, a travel journal, a history lesson, a political thriller and a crime drama all rolled into one. It even has a footballing sub-plot! The only downside? I want to go to Chile now!

Mandy says

I feel bad giving up on this book, but my heart just isn't in reading it. For one thing, the type is minuscule and I am of an age where that means I need to find some ready readers in order to read it, and they are never about. I have so many books, that means I just turn to another, easier to read book. The other thing is that the book is heavily about Chile, and I am not.

I might just hand onto this book and give it a second try sometime. It might just be my mood now.

Janine says

Took me an AGE to get into this book sometimes only being able to read one page at a time! I didn't know anything about Chile or it's political history and wasn't sure I wanted to - page after page of names of places and people I'd never heard of. There were times when I very nearly gave up. I was pleased I stuck it out though and the reading did get easier (or I became more comfortable with the author's style). Hard to believe that everyone knew so much about the historical influence of certain individuals but nonetheless quite an interesting mix of laid-back life versus political angst and an insight into life in Chile.

Yvette Burfin says

I loved this book. I found the writing style intelligent, sensitive and poetic yet the book remained very easy to pick up and put down - essential for a busy mother of three. I know next to nothing about Chile and her politics, people, cities and climate and this book has left me with a massive desire to start reading up on the history of the country and to book flights to see it for myself. I totally recommend this book and look forward to reading more of Richards' works.

David Burton says

Interesting tale, nicely drawn characters, and a well-woven series of events, all set in Chile. Reminded me a lot of my time in Spain, and I was pulled in and involved, but not to the same degree that I have been before in other Richards' books. This would've needed to be quite something to surpass *The Silver River*, and all-but extraordinary to top *A Sweetheart Deal*, still my two favourites, but it was still a lot more entertaining than others books I've read, and probably almost deserved 4 stars. Although it sets up the now by studying the past, I felt there was JUST a TAD too much history when I wanted to be enveloped in the contemporary characters and friendships.

Nicola says

I could almost smell Chile by the atmosphere the book creates. However I found the book hard to get into and found myself wanting to skip pages just to get through it.

Ian says

Richards has produced a nicely paced novel in which the plot and sub plots are easy to follow, the scene setting tangible, the relationships complicated but relatable.

The main protagonists of Joe and Fresia are at the apex of overlaid love triangles, set against a backdrop of a Chile emerging not only from Pinochet's dictatorship but also the open untreated wound of his brutal coup over the populist Allende.

The push and pull of right and left, right and wrong, is all pervading and the country is struggling to create its identity and place in the world.

Joe, Fresia and their associates traverse the world of the wealthy and the poor, a little too seamlessly at times but necessarily to enable the political intrigues and social contrasts to unfold and be laid bare.

I simply could not attempt to improve on this commendable review by Alfred Hickling of *The Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003/...> although I would add that there are two things which prevent me from offering this book a higher rating; there being too many clumsy coincidences, too many rather unlikely chance meetings, used to connect the various threads of the story, and the way that the middle class young people seem never to need to earn a penny or peso towards funding their relatively spendthrift, bohemian lifestyle. They are all too obvious and cringe worthy failings but they are not what the book ultimately will be warmly remembered for.

Angus Mcfarlane says

I was recommended this book as an iconic Chilean read, and it undoubtedly captures a big chunk of the picture. It is written from an expat perspective in English, so the perspective is limited in some sense as a result. However, given that polarization is part of the Chile story, this is only natural. Even so, the book covers a huge amount of territory - historical, socioeconomic, geographic, political - with some storylines that wave this all together in an enjoyable way. There seems to be a lot of lived experience written into the

book, so it seems autobiographical, but there is so much dialogue about Chile's history up until the recent past that it serves in some sense as an informal history also. So, while it struggles a bit for identity, it's a great book for getting to know Chile, and given the expat perspective, makes it a good read for expats.

True to life, some of the big plot lines may not resolve in a satisfactory way - it works well enough in this book. Some of the characters blurred for me also. The title is taken from a sad poem by Neruda, so the somewhat sad mood running underneath this story is fitting. I get the impression, living here 15 years after this book was written that the mood of today is more optimistic. The past is still playing out, and its story will need ongoing retelling, but the future is still being written. It's the best Chilean story I've read so far, and it one I recommend for other reading expats here?

Marty Greenwell says

The reviewers gave this a 3.09. Yes, it can drag, but if you are looking for a "scoping" out by a foreigner into the nation of Chile, it did its job. Joe and Fresia play an unrequited love game as they run their separate lives in Santiago, in the rich man's world outside Santiago and the poor person's world in a barrio also in Santiago. Hints of soccer, Allende vs. Pinochet and attempting to solve a murder cause angst for all. Good, not great.

I got this in July while wandering through the residential neighborhood we lived in for a week in Berlin. Found an English language bookstore and just picked a book off the shelves. Not bad book for a lucky pick!
