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Beginning with Diego, a deaf-mute Mexican-American barely surviving on the border in El Paso, Texas, and progressing to the posh suburbs of San Francisco (where Diego's real sister, "Helen," has long ago abandoned him and her Chicano roots), *Carry Me Like Water* is an epic and immensely moving story that bluntly confronts divisions of race, gender, and class, fusing cultures and personal stories of people born in different Americas. Helen and Eddie Marsh are living the pampered life of a yuppie couple expecting their first child - except that they've made a pact never to reveal anything about their childhood backgrounds. Everything seems to move along fine in their idyllic rendition of the world until Helen's best friend, Lizzie, a dedicated AIDS nurse, begins to discover her own buried past after an unknown patient (who may or may not be her brother) blesses her on his deathbed with his remarkable telekinetic "gift" for out-of-body travel. Lizzie's newfound power, in addition to her blossoming friendship with Jake and Joaquin - a young gay couple coping with AIDS - serves as a catalyst, bringing to light long-buried secrets and causing the disparate worlds of pain and privilege to collide.

Carry Me Like Water Details

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From Reader Review Carry Me Like Water for online ebook

Christi says

Carry Me Like Water is not the first Saenz novel I have read. In fact, I will say I'm quite biased to his work. There's something about his control of language that I really enjoy. That being said, this book is by no means my favorite work by Saenz, but it is definitely a good read.

This story is at times predictable, but Saenz makes up for this in the eloquence of his words. And he has words, all the words. When I first read Saenz I knew he was a poet because his novels stick to me like poetry, and this novel is no different. The characters are imperfect and flawed in all the obvious ways (the gang member who can't seem to stay out of a fight, the rich 'gringos' who can't understand the poverty around them, or the angry, abusive fathers who refuse to accept the blame for any of their misdeeds), but they are also some of the most endearing people you'll ever meet, real or imaginary.

Take Diego, for instance. Diego is a poor, deaf man living all alone in El Paso, TX. He is often described in the novel as an innocent man, one who is on the periphery of life due to his deafness. While I don't believe simply being deaf makes you innocent or even prone to innocence, it is an apt description of Diego who constantly takes it upon himself to always be involved in the lives of those around him without truly expecting anything from anyone else. Sure he's capable of being disappointed by his odd group of friends, but that's about it. He takes his disappointment in stride and although he can get angry at times, he's always willing to forgive. He doesn't demand anything from anyone even when he has the right to. This is tragic, of course, because it leads him to feeling alone most of the time. He's so alone that his only real hobby beyond reading is trying to perfect a suicide note that is addressed to no one in particular. Thankfully, Saenz pushes this character to something far beyond loneliness, and his growth throughout the novel is one of my favorites.

I could write further, more in depth about each of the characters but it would likely take forever, so I will just say this much: Saenz is able to beautifully weave together multiple journeys for his characters in a way that elicits growth and understanding from each and every one of them. Sure, many of the issues in the novel get fixed and tied together with the help of magical realism (it's okay, suspend your disbelief and just go with it) but I found I did not mind this as a reader, because I enjoyed the relationships that were built so much.

Some cons about this novel: as I said before, this work is at times very predictable. Saenz even seems to enjoy dropping hints of what will occur within the dreams the characters have. I could have done without these constant hints. Another con is the length of the novel, which could have easily been done in a couple hundred fewer pages.

I also felt there were a few missed opportunities to develop the main characters further. For instance, in the novel El Paso is practically its own character. We know exactly how it looks and even how it smells. This same level of care and detail is not given to the other cities in the novel. Yet, understanding San Fran or Palo Alto could perhaps help readers fully understand the characters who chose to live in each respective city a little better. A perfect example of this would be Maria Elena. I understand a part of her is simply running from her past, but why is it that she runs to Palo Alto? Or California, for that matter? What is it about these places that called to her?

And for the life of me I cannot figure out why we needed to know so much about certain minor characters and not others. Why did we need to know so much about La Mary's life and absolutely nothing about Salvador? I want to know his story, he is such a huge aspect of the book in many ways and we know almost nothing about him. Or what about the nurse named Carolyn? What came of her?

And finally, one thing I really disliked about this book is that every character seemed to have several names, and it made it really difficult to follow in the beginning. In fact, some separate characters even shared names, which I felt was completely unnecessary to do to the readers (ex: Eddie and Crazy Eddie...two different

dudes). For reference, here is a quick guide of the main characters at least (I don't think this is really a spoiler, but if you want absolutely no spoils then ignore this part):

Helen = Maria Elena = Nena
Eddie = Jonathan = Jon-Jon
Jacob = Jake = Jacob Lesley
Lizzie = Elizabeth Edwards = Maria de Lourdes Aguila
Salvador = Jesus Salvador Aguila
Mundo = Edmundo
Diego = Juan Diego
Jacob Diego Marsh = the baby

Please don't read into my cons too harshly, as I still really loved and recommend this book. I just tend to be more thorough in voicing the things that bugged me rather than the things I loved, that's just me.

Lori says

The writing could have been a little more...nuanced? And it probably could have ended a few dozen pages earlier, but the story was good. I like magical realism, and I liked how there were a lot of moving parts that came together, different people who were unconnected but still connected. Overall, I liked it.

Frankie says

Recensione completa qui: <http://thereadingpal.blogspot.it/2017...>

"I have to get you a doctor."

"Can't I just sleep here?"

Jacob kept rocking him in his arms. "Shhhh. Shhhh. I'll carry you."

"Like water?"

"What?"

"Like a river carries water."

"Yes-just like that."

È davvero difficile riordinare i pensieri riguardo a questo libro. Carry me like water è il terzo libro che leggo di questo autore, ed è anche una delle più belle storie che abbia mai letto.

Seguiamo svariati personaggi: Diego, un ragazzo sordo-muto che cerca di sopravvivere in El Paso, Texas; sua sorella Helen, che vive col marito a San Francisco, cercando di dimenticare completamente le sue origini; Lizzie, la migliore amica di Helen, che, durante il suo turno di lavoro come infermiera, incontra un paziente che distruggerà tutte le sue certezze sulla sua vita; Eddie, il marito di Helen, che cerca di dimenticare il passato, ma il cui passato non lo ha dimentato; Jacob e Joaquin, che sono costretti ad adattare le loro vite alla malattia del secondo, l'AIDS... E poi ancora Mary, Luz, Mundo, Tom, Rose, che cercano di

sopravvivere come possono, molto diversi l'uno dall'altro. Tutti questi personaggi sono legati da un filo rosso: un filo che non può essere spezzato, che li porta assieme e che cambierà le loro vite.

Forse per alcuni potrebbe risultare confusionario avere così tanti personaggi, così diversi tra loro, e con vite così diverse, ma è proprio questo il bello, no? La vita di nessuno è uguale a quella di qualcun altro, eppure ci incontriamo e cambiamo la vita l'uno dell'altro, proprio come succede in questo romanzo. Accanto a dei temi come il razzismo e l'omofobia troviamo anche quello della famiglia e dell'amore, dell'attaccamento alle proprie origini, alla vita stessa.

Il dolore si confonde con la felicità, in vite non facili ma in cui le gioie non mancano, nel ritmo della vita di ognuno.

Ed è impossibile non amare questi personaggi, in particolare Diego, che è quello che cambia e cresce di più pur restando fedele a se stesso. Ho amato anche Mundo, che pur dovendo essere un personaggio poco positivo è uno dei personaggi più importanti, che spinge Diego ad avere una vita migliore.

La rabbia di Jacob è praticamente palpabile e totalmente comprensibile, proprio come il suo dolore. Porta entrambi come macigni sulla sua anima e non riesce a lasciarli andare, proprio come Joaquin.

Helen mi è piaciuta nella sua fatica a lasciare indietro il passato e a riabbracciarlo tornando alle sue origini e alla ricerca di quel fratello che aveva abbandonato anni prima.

Forse l'unica "pecca" è stata Lizzie e il suo dono, una cosa che ho trovato strana ma che ha comunque un suo perché nella storia, e lei è anche uno dei personaggi che mi è piaciuto meno, anzi, forse l'unico.

La scrittura di Sáenz ha qualcosa di speciale, di magico, a tratti poetico, che non mi ha permesso di abbandonare questo libro in nessun modo, me lo ha reso caro proprio come la storia. Ho perso il conto di quante volte avrei voluto sottolineare alcune frasi, cosa che io non faccio mai. È uno di quei libri che ti rimane dentro, che ti porti dietro tutta la vita anche se ti dimentichi i nomi dei personaggi o l'autore, perché è ciò che ti trasmette e come ti modella che ha importanza, null'altro.

Questo libro è molto diverso da quelli che leggo di solito, molto più profondo, per certi versi, di *Last Night I sang to the Monster* e *Aristotle and Dante discover the Secrets of the Universe*, tanto che ora che l'ho terminato ho come un vuoto dentro.

Davvero, non so più cosa dire se non che ho amato questo libro, e che ora ho quasi paura ad aspettare di leggere gli altri libri che mi mancano di Sáenz...

Barbara Mcpherson says

Although it took me a few chapters to get interested in the plot, his writing is beautiful throughout. Saenz creates characters who remind us of our flaws, yet leave us hopeful about mankind's ability to accept each other.

Sarah Fuller says

There was a lot going on in this book and so much of it was about humanity. Humanity at its best, worst, compassionate, angry, humbled, loving and pained. Each character was unique and fully fleshed out. Even the characters that only have moments.

I had put this book on a constant 'I'll read it later' shelf because of its size. I'm happy I finally got to it, the size was more daunting only before I started.

This is one of those books that makes you laugh and cry, take deep breaths and think. These people got under

my skin and they felt like I knew them as family members not characters in a book. So much of this book was depressing, the death, the disease, the hate. But, in the end, and thank the Lord, life, family, compassion and love ends the book. Not to say it's a happily ever after with no more pain, but for this set of people, they find a sense of peace.

Micol Mian says

Immaginavo che avrei amato questo romanzo, ma non avevo idea di *quanto*. Molto rapidamente, soltanto per fissare le idee, perché prima o poi dovrò scrivervi qualcosa di compiuto: è come se fosse stato scritto apposta per me, quando ero bambina, e rimasto in attesa per anni che mi decidessi a prenderlo finalmente in mano. "Portami come acqua", davvero - un titolo che è anche un simbolo e un motivo ricorrente e la prima cosa che mi ha attratto e quella che in qualche modo racchiude meglio l'effetto che mi ha fatto il romanzo. Che poi è il primo di Sáenz e sembra già racchiudere tutto: le sue famiglie di scelta, e di sangue - è un romanzo di fratelli, vivi e morti e feriti e perduti, e di sorelle che si scelgono da grandi, e di genitori orrendi e genitori bellissimi, e di amanti e amici e tutte le sfumature intermedie possibili - il deserto e la pioggia, il confine, El Paso come inizio e conclusione, e poi morte, tantissima, struggente e al tempo stesso leggera, un'occasione come un'altra di celebrare la vita, e spiriti che lasciano il corpo, candele accese per aiutare il passaggio, il silenzio in cui vive immerso Diego e i suoi bigliettini che lo infrangono, le lettere che Eddie e Jake si scrivono senza mai spedirle, affidandole a diari, conservando l'uno il ricordo dell'altro come un talismano che fa quasi spavento, e i mille modi diversi di affrontare il dolore, di riscrivere il passato. Il passato che ritorna, sempre, e a volte non è neanche cattivo. E un coro meraviglioso di personaggi che si intrecciano e si incrociano e si amano, teneramente, come acqua, davvero.

Era tutto quello che desideravo.

Carol says

This is a beautiful story which I am now rereading after 10 years. It is about love, forgiveness, acceptance with a little bit of mystic.

Mary says

This book - no spoilers here - was one of the most fantastical, different books I've ever read. It had deep, dark depth, laughter with tears, and an overall fascinating look at the human condition. It is one I will most assuredly be reading again.

Alyssa Garcia says

i loved it like i love everything this man writes. stories so full of love like this are a weakness of mine, especially when it's between unlikely characters. also stories within stories that eventually connect; another weakness of mine. it is obvious that this is an early novel of his (his first actually) because his writing is not as refined as in others. sometimes it's too... i don't even know what the word is, but sometimes his use of words is... nauseating... in a completely non disrespectful way. still 5 stars though because of the way it

gripped my heart and because it's such a love letter to my hometown.

Harley says

4.5 Stars.

A hidden gem that deserves more love!!!

Brooke says

I have been trying to read all of Benjamin Alire Saenz's books after loving "Aristotle & Dante..." and this one is the best! This is tied for favorite book read in the past 5 years (with Let the Great World Spin). This actually has a lot of similar characteristics as Let the Great World Spin. I also read this immediately after my grandfather's death and think that it helped in a way, especially with the magical, fantastical, supernatural parts of Lizzie's adventures. I am just sorry I didn't read it sooner! Bravo Mr. Saenz for capturing the desert south, the border life of El Paso, and the sweet sorrow of life & death and long lost family members. I wanted to be a part of this wonderful group of people. I hope to recommend this book to others and await their feedback as well!

Andune says

Heartbreaking. This novel got under my skin, and like life itself, moved me, annoyed me, humbled me, struck me, and changed me. I believe that to be human in this world is to be heartbroken, vulnerable and uncertain. And compassionate. To be truly human is to be compassionate. In this novel, Benjamin Alire Sáenz spoke to that.

I won't go through the blurb, in fact I don't really know if anyone will read this review, but if you are reading and are looking for something to take you on a journey that goes beyond nationality, gender, and "normalcy", then this might be a good choice. I was compelled to buy this book when I read one of the main characters was deaf-mute. That intrigued me very much and I have found that exploring different boundaries of human experience through literature feels real and meaningful and dignified.

Sometimes it takes me a while to find a book that is really worthwhile. I end up going through many novels that eroticize everything. For me, violence for violence's sake is not sexy. Aggression, drama, and crudeness is not sexy. Kindness, now that is sexy. When a writer can portray genuine kindness in his characters, that does something very profound to me. It's almost sensual. It makes all that time spent looking for a good book so very worth it.

Laura says

A true 5 star rating.

A couple times I opened this book on my e-reader, looked at the page count and went to something else. It was long, but once I got into it I didn't find it as daunting. The characters were loveable, and I loved how everyone was connected. My mom's best friend died of AIDS so that was another reason I hesitated with this for so long but the author did Joaquin & Jacob's story justice. Carry Me Like Water was emotional, strange and hooked me from the first chapter.

Definitely recommend this!

Katherine says

This is my favorite book of all time!! I am planning on going and taking a class from him for my masters. An amazing book, intertwining lives in the most unique and overwhelming way.

Erin says

This book really was and wasn't. I just don't know how to feel about it.

Simultaneously great and awful... I want to say the characters were well developed, but at the same time they weren't. Someone called it a soap opera, and it is, with this weird dash of the supernatural (for no good reason if you ask me). I almost gave up on it about 50 pages in, but at the same time, I just couldn't put it down.

My biggest complaint? The rampant use of the word "lovers" is almost more than I can handle. Are there people who actually talk like that? "how many lovers have you had" "she snuggled up next to her lover" "he held his dying lover in his arms" lover lover lover. augh.
