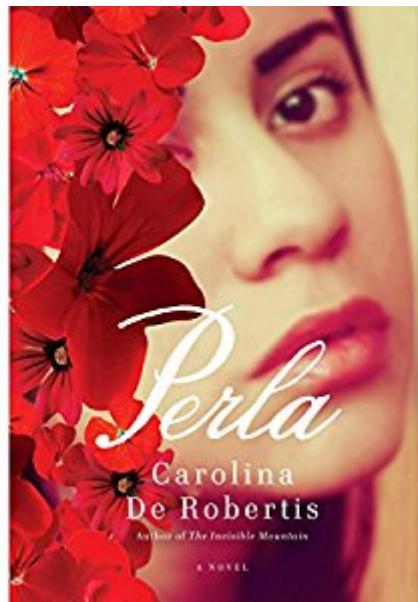


The book was found

Perla



Synopsis

A coming-of-age story, based on a recent shocking chapter of Argentine history, about a young woman who makes a devastating discovery about her origins with the help of an enigmatic houseguest. Perla Correa grew up a privileged only child in Buenos Aires, with a cold, polished mother and a straitlaced naval officer father, whose profession she learned early on not to disclose in a country still reeling from the abuses perpetrated by the deposed military dictatorship. Perla understands that her parents were on the wrong side of the conflict, but her love for her papÃfÃ is unconditional. But when Perla is startled by an uninvited visitor, she begins a journey that will force her to confront the unease she has suppressed all her life, and to make a wrenching decision about who she is, and who she will become.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hoursÂ andÂ 18 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Random House Audio

Audible.com Release Date: March 27, 2012

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B007P0759M

Best Sellers Rank: #79 inÂ Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Latin America #3206
inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Political #9589 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction
> Genre Fiction > Coming of Age

Customer Reviews

*Possible Spoilers*There have been many literary manifestations born out of Argentina's Dirty War (1976-82). Liliana Heker's *Fin de La Historia, El* (B) (Spanish Edition) is an excellent novel about two young women who have to come to grips with their opposing views of the conflict. Juan Gelman wrote some beautiful poetry memorializing his missing son and daughter-in-law. Laura Restrepo's *DEMASIADOS HEROES* (Spanish Edition)explores some interesting aspects of the conflict, but ultimately fails as a memorable portrayal.Purgatorio (Spanish Edition) by TomÃjs Eloy MartÃ-nez also explores questions of survival guilt and memory. Elena Cabrejas's novel *Algo Habran Hecho* (Spanish Edition) is a moving and quite realistic story of the famous missing French

nuns. There have also been some questionable novels that use the Dirty War as a historical backdrop but that completely fail in probing the depths of the historical time period and come across as hollow and meaningless (ie. *The Unforgivable*).

Just so you know where I'm coming from, I'm a guy, a fairly typical guy. I like things that guys tend to like. Baseball. Plain straightforward prose. Stories with big ideas. OK, I deviate from the typical guy likes in that I have a soft spot for opera and musicals. I have, in fact, cried during certain performances of *Butterfly* and *Carmen*. But that's not because I have a soft spot for love stories alone; it's because I have a soft spot for love stories set to music. Throw away the music and I'm back in guy mode watching March Madness on my TV and fretting over my brackets. Enough background. On to this book. *Perla* is actually a pretty good novel in terms of construction. It's a step up over a similar book I read recently, *Sarah's Key*. It's better written. There is a real plot. I thought I might like this book quite a bit because the plot revolves around the stolen children of Argentina's Dirty War, a subject of great interest to me (I have relatives who lived through that war). But ultimately this novel isn't about the Dirty War. It's about matters of the heart, in particular the matters of a heart of a young Argentinean woman. The prose is florid. The plot is pretty much the over-heightened stuff of opera. An operatic treatment of this story just might be the ticket. But without music, stories like this sag for me. I think *Perla* will sag for most guys, opera-lovers or no. There is an audience for this book, a solid one. I know just the person I'm going to give this book to next: my mother-in-law. Yes, I like my mother-in-law. I'm not trying to torture her, honest. She loves stories like this, solidly written novels with a female narrator dealing with love in its many dimensions. If you're that type of reader, I'm guessing you'll like this book quite a bit.

Let me begin by stating that reading this book had the same effect on me as visiting places like ESMA (the oft-mentioned clandestine detention center in the novel) or similar memory sites in Chile (which, like Argentina, also suffered under a bloody military dictatorship), such as Villa Grimaldi. I was left with the same emotions that I carried whenever I visited those places, meaning that oftentimes, while reading this book, I would have to take a break, get something to drink, go walk around, etc., because everything about it was just *too much.* Let me also say that, until now, no book has ever made me break out in sobs in the middle of reading it. Anyway, *PERLA* was positively phenomenal and far exceeded the already very high expectations that I had for it (I was already huge fan of de Robertis' debut *THE INVISIBLE MOUNTAIN*). When I saw that de Robertis was writing a novel about the desaparecidos (the disappeared) of Argentina, I started counting down the

days until its release. The phenomenon of the extreme right-wing Cold War-era dictatorships in the Southern Cone (including the dictatorship in Argentina - the "National Reorganization Process") is a subject I've studied for years and, for the longest time, I've been thirsting for a truly excellent English-language novel about this subject. PERLA is it, and far more. I won't rehash the plot, because that's what the book blurb is for (I also don't want to give away any spoilers, but if you are in any way familiar with the history of the Dirty War, you'll catch onto what Perla's "secret" is very early into the book). Instead I'll list some of the main things I loved about this book. Firstly, everyone was so real (character-wise).

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Perla Perla La Loca (Love and Rockets)

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