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Something Fierce: Memoirs Of A Revolutionary Daughter



Synopsis

Winner of CBC's Canada Reads 2012 and Globe 100 Best Book of the year in 2011! Carmen Aguirre was six-year-old when she and her family fled to Canada following General Augusto Pinochet's violent 1973 coup in Chile. She was only eleven-years-old when her mother and stepfather joined the resistance movement and returned to South America, taking Carmen and her sister with them. As their mother and stepfather set up a safe house for resistance members in La Paz, Bolivia, the girls' own double lives began. At 18, Carmen became a militant herself, plunging further into a world of terror, paranoia and euphoria. *Something Fierce* covers the eventful decade of 1979 to 1989 and takes the reader inside war-ridden Peru, dictator-ruled Bolivia, post-Malvinas Argentina and Pinochet's Chile in the eventful decade between 1979 and 1989. Writing with passion and deep personal insight, Aguirre captures her constant struggle to reconcile her commitment to the movement with the desires of her youth. Dramatic, suspenseful and darkly comic, it is a rare first-hand account of revolutionary life and a passionate argument against forgetting.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After the Chilean coup in 1973, *Something Fierce* author Carmen Aguirre and her family were forced to flee. Due to an agreement between Augusto Pinochet and Pierre Trudeau in which the Canadian Prime Minister (p 6) "agreed to offer asylum to Chilean refugees," the Aguirres became "one of the first Chilean refugee families to arrive" in Canada. Her memoirs begin in June of 1979 with the family, consisting of the then 11-year-old Carmen, her 10-year-old sister Ale, their mother

(also named Carmen), and her stepfather, Bob, at LAX. The girls learn they are headed to La Paz, Bolivia, where, in response to the Return Plan, their parents plan to take part in the resistance. While many members of the resistance sent their children off to (p 100) "to live with Cuban families who'd volunteered to raise them or with grandparents somewhere else," "As far as [Ale and Carmen's mother] was concerned, a woman shouldn't have to choose between motherhood and revolution. She wanted both," so she kept her daughters close. Ms. Aguirre's mother proclaims (p 7), "To be in the resistance is a matter of life and death. To say the wrong thing to the wrong person is a matter of life and death," thus the family is forced to live a cautious, dual life, in which they try to fit in and avoid calling attention to themselves. As such, they rub elbows and break bread with both supporters and opponents of the movement.

SOMETHING FIERCE: MEMOIRS OF A REVOLUTIONARY DAUGHTER by Carmen

Aguirre Review by Kathleen Schmitt Darkly comic? That's the description of the book given by, I think, the publisher. Yes, there are some funny parts. Life without humor is sort of like life without breathing, and the more extreme the conditions, the more likely some humor will erupt. But humor is not the main point of *Something Fierce*. This is a book of passionate anger against violent crimes and the will to give everything to stop them. What makes the book so compelling is that our protagonist is so young and so vulnerable. Carmen Aguirre, along with her mother, step-father, and sister, led a double life, first as a child of revolutionaries, and later as a revolutionary herself, from the time she was eleven years old. The story she reveals in this memoir is one that every thoughtful person should read, because we know so little of what the resistance and the sacrifice of Latin Americans has been in their quest over the last century to gain independence from a succession of imperial forces, the latest and longest being the United States of America with its commercial dominance. Curiously, we see that the blatant inhumanity of Latin American leaders trained by the School of the Americas (USA) in techniques of ruthless oppression, destruction and torture has persuaded many citizens of those countries to turn against extreme capitalism, especially in its newest form, "The New Economic Order," or neo-liberalism. Of great importance to the story is that the local dictators in these countries never could have succeeded in creating such nightmarish conditions for the people without the military and financial aid of the USA.

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