

Pancho II by Don Eric Carroll

5 stars

A second outing for the irrepressible Mexican

Having reviewed and loved the first 'Pancho', I came to this with some misgivings. Could Carroll ever recreate the sheer magic of the first book?

I needn't have worried, Pancho is back in all his glory!

This second foray is both a prequel and a sequel as it brackets the Summer of the first book with the Spring and Winter of this one, thus formulating 'A year in the life of rural Mexico'.

Set in the late 1950s, technology hasn't yet fully arrived; there are cars and cinemas, but neither really feature in the lives of the farmers and ranchers whose lives differ little from the beginning of the century.

While the Summer covered an eventful period spent mostly with Pancho's fellow rancheros, the Spring and Winter have a different feel, concentrating more on his relationships with friends and with the Ramos family who has adopted him as their own.

Pancho first enjoys a Christmas with the family, the redoubtable Maria (Mama), daughters Christina, Ruth and Julia, with less emphasis on the men of the family.

This book has all the charm of the first novel but brings Pancho into another orbit. His demeanour is warmer and softer as he spends time with his friend Florencino, blind since birth, but in no way disabled, who weaves baskets in the neighbouring pueblito. Then, in the local town he meets up with an English artist, and we enjoy the more raucous Pancho, who drinks and dances and finds himself sweeping the streets as reparation for bad behaviour.

Pancho, while fictional, is written in pure 3D; he is a force of nature, fully formed into this complex character who is funny, insightful, sympathetic, acerbic, loyal and loving, all at the same time; totally unique and almost a living legend. Most of all he is a survivor.

As in the first novel the writing is superb. Pancho is sensitive to others, exuberant in himself and above all, a philosopher and student of human nature.

This book has no real plot, is slow-paced and parochial but remains a real page turner, with every page a delight in itself.

Loved it! I look forward to a sequel!

Pashtpaws

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.