



## Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club

By Benjamin Alire Saenz

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**Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club** By Benjamin Alire Saenz

### Winner of the 2013 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction!

Benjamin Alire Sáenz's stories reveal how all borders--real, imagined, sexual, human, the line between dark and light, addict and straight--entangle those who live on either side. Take, for instance, the Kentucky Club on Avenida Juárez two blocks south of the Rio Grande. It's a touchstone for each of Sáenz's stories. His characters walk by, they might go in for a drink or to score, or they might just stay there for a while and let their story be told. Sáenz knows that the Kentucky Club, like special watering holes in all cities, is the contrary to borders. It welcomes Spanish and English, Mexicans and gringos, poor and rich, gay and straight, drug addicts and drunks, laughter and sadness, and even despair. It's a place of rich history and good drinks and cold beer and a long polished mahogany bar. Some days it smells like piss. "I'm going home to the other side." That's a strange statement, but you hear it all the time at the Kentucky Club.

**Benjamin Alire Sáenz** is a highly regarded writer of fiction, poetry, and children's literature. Like these stories, his writing crosses borders and lands in our collective psyche. *Poets & Writers Magazine* named him one of the fifty most inspiring writers in the world. He's been a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize and PEN Center's prestigious award for young adult fiction. Sáenz is the chair of the creative writing department of University of Texas at El Paso.

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## Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club By Benjamin Alire Saenz Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

The publisher describes these seven excellent stories as being about borders. That is certainly true as far as it goes, but it is equally true that these stories have even more to do with boundaries—the boundaries people set to protect themselves from physical or emotional harm, the ones that people cross in order to survive, or the ones they cross to intrude or intervene in someone else's life. Sáenz's tales are about the arbitrary boundaries that society sets and the ones children build against a world they don't understand. In today's political climate, one that is awash in ideology surrounding national borders, Sáenz's all-too-human characters transcend political polarization despite living within it. A versatile writer who has won major fellowships and awards, especially for his young adult and children's titles, Sáenz writes prose that is tender, occasionally fierce, and always engaging. Read every word of his stories lest you miss some clever twist, some subtle irony, some gentle nuance of poetic imagery that he has labored to create. --Donna Chavez

Review

"Sáenz's moving collection of short stories hinges on the intergenerational clientele of the titular borderland watering hole just south of the U.S.-Mexican divide on Avenida Juárez...there's much to enjoy in these gritty, heartfelt stories. — **Publishers Weekly**

"Seven excellent stories ... [by] a versatile writer ... Sáenz writes prose that is tender, occasionally fierce, and always engaging. Read every word of his stories lest you miss some clever twist, some subtle irony, some gentle nuance of poetic imagery that he has labored to create." — **Booklist**

"Seven stunningly evocative short stories ... a haunting tableau of characters wrestling with the boons and burdens of existence ... Saenz, with these masterfully hewn stories, presents this hardscrabble yet tenacious city as beautiful in its contradictions, disquieting in its ambiguities, and heartbreaking in its quotidianness. Filtered through this book are the lives of its singular people: doomed, broken, resourceful, and, above all else, faithful—to the city and to the parts they play in its intricate dimensions." — **Texas Books in Review**

"Though the prolific Benjamin Alire Sáenz has been writing books in every genre for the past two decades, *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club* is only his second short-story collection. But the wait was definitely worth it ... [The story "He Has Gone to Be with the Women"] is nothing short of a masterpiece ... In one story, a school counselor says the following about his troubled charges: "They came to me with a thirst in their eyes, a thirst, such a thirst and I knew that I could never give them the rain they deserved, the rain they so desperately needed." That might as well be *The Kentucky Club* speaking, since every protagonist in this heartbreaking collection of stories finds his way to a confession stool at the bar. They find no solutions to their ills, just a sensitive ear that has heard it all before but is willing to listen once again." — Rigoberto González, former president of the executive board of directors of the National Book Critics Circle, special to the **El Paso Times**

About the Author

Benjamin Alire Sáenz was born in 1954 in Old Picacho, a small farming village outside of Las Cruces, New Mexico, forty-two miles north of the U.S. / Mexico border. He was the fourth of seven children and was brought up in a traditional Mexican-American Catholic family. He entered the seminary in 1972, a decision

that was as much political as it was religious. After concluding his theological studies at the University of Louvain, he was ordained a Catholic priest. Three and a half years later, he left the priesthood.

At the age of 30, he entered the University of Texas at El Paso. He later received a fellowship at the University of Iowa. In 1988, he received a Wallace E. Stegner Fellowship in poetry from Stanford University. In 1993, he returned to the border to teach in the bilingual MFA program at UTEP.

Sáenz is the author of a previous book of poetry, *Calendar of Dust*, which won an American Book Award. Cinco Puntos published two of his other books of poetry called *Elegies in Blue* and the now out of print, *Dark and Perfect Angels*. His most recent book of poetry, *The Book of What Remains*, was published by Copper Canyon Press in 2010.

He is the author of numerous novels, books for children and young adults as well as a previous collection of short stories. His award winning young adult novels are *Sammy & Juliana in Hollywood*, *He Forgot to Say Goodbye*, and *Last Night I Sang to the Monster*. His adult novels include *Carry Me Like Water*, *The House of Forgetting*, *In Perfect Light*, and *Names on a Map*.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Alvin Pryor:**

People live in this new morning of lifestyle always aim to and must have the extra time or they will get large amount of stress from both way of life and work. So , whenever we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely of course. People is human not only a robot. Then we request again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to a person of course your answer can unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club*.

#### **Jennifer Jones:**

Are you kind of active person, only have 10 or 15 minute in your day to upgrading your mind talent or thinking skill also analytical thinking? Then you are experiencing problem with the book as compared to can satisfy your short period of time to read it because all this time you only find e-book that need more time to be learn. *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club* can be your answer as it can be read by an individual who have those short time problems.

#### **Danny Johnson:**

Reading a book to get new life style in this 12 months; every people loves to read a book. When you study a book you can get a great deal of benefit. When you read textbooks, you can improve your knowledge, due to the fact book has a lot of information in it. The information that you will get depend on what sorts of book that you have read. If you need to get information about your study, you can read education books, but if you want to entertain yourself you can read a fiction books, these us novel, comics, in addition to soon. The *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club* will give you new experience in looking at a book.

**Joshua Yoshida:**

As a college student exactly feel bored for you to reading. If their teacher asked them to go to the library or even make summary for some reserve, they are complained. Just tiny students that has reading's internal or real their pastime. They just do what the professor want, like asked to go to the library. They go to at this time there but nothing reading really. Any students feel that reading is not important, boring along with can't see colorful images on there. Yeah, it is to get complicated. Book is very important for you. As we know that on this period, many ways to get whatever we wish. Likewise word says, many ways to reach Chinese's country. So , this Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club can make you feel more interested to read.

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