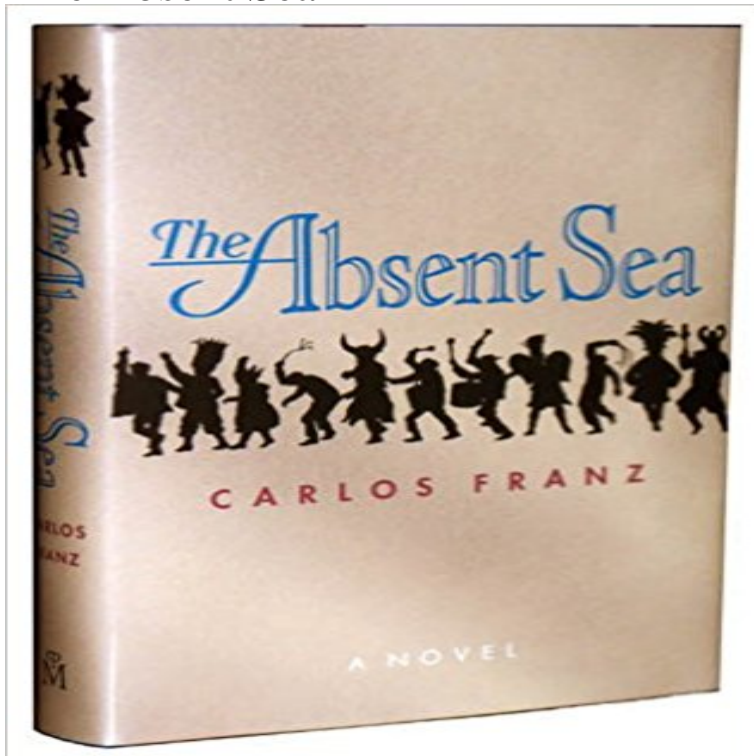


The Absent Sea



The Absent Sea is the English-language debut of one of the most important Chilean novelists living, a major novel that hovers between actual history and timeless mythology. Just before the coup d'état that overturned Chile's government under Allende, a young, idealistic judge is posted to a provincial center in the vast northern desert. After the coup, the town is occupied by the military, which establishes a concentration death camp for dissidents. Immediately, the conflicted relationship between the judge, Laura, and the commandant, Major Caceres, leads to a life-changing decision which results in her lengthy exile to Germany. Twenty years later, she returns to Chile to face up to her past, and to answer the scathing question flung at her by her daughter: Where were you, Mama, when all those horrible things were happening in your city? Laura's reply to her daughter takes the form of a long letter about the dramatic events of twenty years before. Meanwhile, in alternating chapters, Laura's return coincides with a religious festival. By the end of three days, the city and all its inhabitants will be forever altered. In *The Absent Sea*, Carlos Franz tells a fascinating story which is at once an investigation into the depths of human cruelty and compassion on an occasion of historical violence. Written and constructed with a masterful hand, it is one of the most original novels that modern Latin American literature has produced.--Mario Vargas Llosa

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