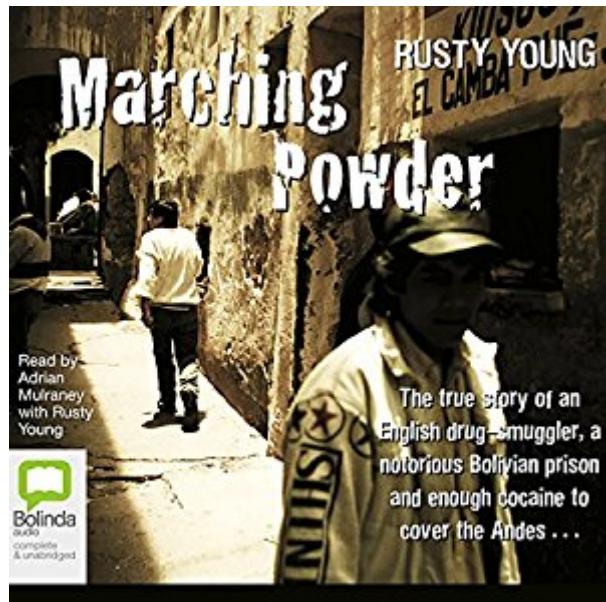


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# Marching Powder



## **Synopsis**

A true story of friendship, cocaine and South America's strangest jail. Rusty Young was backpacking in South America when he heard about Thomas McFadden, a convicted English drug trafficker who ran tours inside Bolivia's notorious San Pedro prison. Intrigued, the twenty-something Australian law graduate travelled to La Paz and joined one of Thomas's illegal tours. What followed took both men by surprise: they formed a strong and instant friendship and then became partners in an attempt to record Thomas's experiences in the jail. Rusty bribed the guards to allow him to stay and for the next three months he lived inside the prison, sharing a cell with Thomas and recording one of the strangest and most compelling prison stories of all time. Sometimes shocking, sometimes funny, Marching Powder is an always riveting story of survival.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In 1995, Thomas McFadden was arrested at El Alto airport in La Paz in Bolivia for drug smuggling in a sting operation set up by a local policeman. Thomas was then sent to the local San Pedro prison after almost being starved to death by the local police because he didn't have any cash on him to pay for food in their holding pens. San Pedro prison turned out to be the strangest place Thomas had ever been in his life. It was a microcosm of the entire Bolivian economy. People ran shops, made and traded drugs, bribed all the police and guards on a daily basis and had their wives and children live with them in jail. Thomas is honest and straightforward in stating that before his arrest he was a professional drug smuggler and after his introduction to prison a regular cocaine taker as well. He's not an angel, but this is a fascinating story of good times and bad times and the friends

and enemies of life in the strangest prison you'll ever read about. The moral of this story is - if you have to go to prison in South America make sure its San Pedro and that you are rich and any of other nationality aside from USA. "Gringos" can survive these prisons but they can also be brutal to people that they hate and this book shows you both the light and dark sides of San Pedro prison and a place that was at one point one of South America's strangest tourist attractions.

In early 1998, while traveling solo through South America, I was told I had to visit Thomas McFadden when I got to LaPaz. After I visited Thomas, I told two other travelers, so I can see how his tour business was so large. When I came back to the USA, I only told a few people about visiting Thomas because being a female traveling alone it wasn't the smartest thing I ever did. So, when I read about this book in Oprah, I was so excited to read his story. I thought the book was very well written, easy to read and very entertaining; I think everyone who reads this book will like it. Some of the reviews don't believe his is for real, but I know he is. As far as embellishing I can't comment on that, but he is a very likeable guy. I spent the day with him as his visitor. He was extremely courteous and nice. In the afternoon, I didn't know how to repay him for showing me around so I asked what I could do for him. He wanted a pizza from outside the prison. When I came back with the Pizza it was when visiting hours were ending, so Thomas bribed the guards to let me in. I didn't know all this until later. I was brought to his section and locked in. At that moment, I was pretty scared. But, once I found Thomas, we had a fun time eating p

I picked this book up based on the cover design, then read the back jacket and decided it was a book for me! I love "true life" stories and this is one of the more bizarre ones you will ever read. This is the story of a prisoner as told by a man who came to befriend him over repeated visits to the prison. The plot centers around the man's 4+ year stint in Bolivian prison, but tells so much more than this story. "Marching Powder" delves into the rampant corruption inside the prison, the bizarre, surreal microcosm of the prison, and one man's odyssey to be released from prison and continue with his life. If you have seen the film "Midnight Express," this book is reminiscent of it. The story takes place almost entirely inside a Bolivian prison. Life inside this prison has its own set of rules and regulations, and is unlike anything you could imagine. The prison has its own economy, its own neighborhoods, and a cast of characters (including a crack-addicted cat) that could have come out of a movie. The book moves quickly, the writing is fluid and vivid, the characters are larger than life, and some of the details can be jaw-dropping.

Thomas McFadden is a drug trafficker. Oh don't worry, he freely admits to it in this book and he was actually caught trying to smuggle drugs out of South America when he was double crossed by a customs official. What I found in this book was a surprisingly funny, yet also dark account of life in Bolivia's San Pedro prison. Basically if you don't have any money to bribe the guards you don't even get food to eat let alone a cell to call your own. That's right, you have to pay for your own cell like it was real estate! The book is written by Rusty Young, an Australian backpacking in South America who had heard of a guy in San Pedro who was giving tours and overnight stays in the prison, for a price. Three months later Rusty emerged with Thomas' story of mob justice, violence, bribery, drugs, women, love and even a night out on the town. Thomas never really apologises for anything he has done, and if anything he gives us quite an insight into the global drug trafficking business. But most of the book focuses on Thomas' time in San Pedro and his often fight to stay alive. I'm not normally a non-fiction fan, but I have to admit this book was VERY interesting!

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