

Cuba Diaries: An American Housewife in Havana

Isadora Tattlin



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Isadora Tattlin was accustomed to relocating often for her husband's work. But when he accepted a post in Cuba in the early 1990s, she resolved to keep a detailed diary of her time there, recording her daily experiences as a wife, mother, and foreigner in a land of contraband. The result is a striking, rare glimpse into a tiny country of enormous splendor and squalor. Though the Tattlins are provided with a well-staffed Havana mansion, the store shelves are bare. On the streets, beggars plead for soap, not coins. A vet with few real medical supplies operates on a carved mahogany coffee table in a Louis XIV-style drawing room. The people adore festivity, but Christmas trees are banned. And when Isadora hosts a dinner party whose guest list includes Fidel Castro himself, she observes the ultimate contradiction at the very heart of Cuba. Vividly capturing Cuba's simultaneously appalling and enchanting essence, Cuba Diaries casts an irresistible spell and lifts the enigma of an island that is trapped in time, but not in spirit.

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