



Next Year in Havana

Chanel Cleeton

Download now

Read Online →

Next Year in Havana

Chanel Cleeton

Next Year in Havana Chanel Cleeton

After the death of her beloved grandmother, a Cuban-American woman travels to Havana, where she discovers the roots of her identity--and unearths a family secret hidden since the revolution...

Havana, 1958. The daughter of a sugar baron, nineteen-year-old Elisa Perez is part of Cuba's high society, where she is largely sheltered from the country's growing political unrest--until she embarks on a clandestine affair with a passionate revolutionary...

Miami, 2017. Freelance writer Marisol Ferrera grew up hearing romantic stories of Cuba from her late grandmother Elisa, who was forced to flee with her family during the revolution. Elisa's last wish was for Marisol to scatter her ashes in the country of her birth.

Arriving in Havana, Marisol comes face-to-face with the contrast of Cuba's tropical, timeless beauty and its perilous political climate. When more family history comes to light and Marisol finds herself attracted to a man with secrets of his own, she'll need the lessons of her grandmother's past to help her understand the true meaning of courage.

Next Year in Havana Details

Date : Published February 6th 2018 by Penguin/Berkley

ISBN : 9780399586682

Author : Chanel Cleeton

Format : Paperback 361 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Romance, Contemporary

 [Download Next Year in Havana ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Next Year in Havana ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Next Year in Havana Chanel Cleeton

From Reader Review Next Year in Havana for online ebook

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

A moving dual timeline historical novel set in Cuba, both in modern times and during the 1958-59 period of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution.

Havana, Cuba (the author specifically mentions how many old cars and vehicles are still on the streets - most Cubans can't replace them with newer cars so they take loving care of them)

El Malecón

Cuba's past is seen through the eyes of Elisa in 1958-59, a young woman from a wealthy upper class family who starts a secret romance with a revolutionary who fights against the corrupt regime of Fulgencio Batista, alongside Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. In the modern timeline, we have Elisa's Cuban-American granddaughter Marisol, a journalist of "light" topics who hugely misses her recently deceased grandmother.

The story begins with Elisa and her family leaving Cuba after Castro has taken control, then jumps back about a year to show how things got to that point. Her chapters alternate with Marisol's, who takes a first-time trip to Cuba to scatter her grandmother Elisa's ashes in the country she grew up in and loved, the place she always longed to return to. Marisol stays with the family of Ana, her grandmother's best friend, unearths long-hidden secrets, and finds her own romance that is fraught with difficulties due to the political turmoil.

Next Year in Havana is well-written and VERY well researched, though not quite as engaging for me as I'd hoped. I think that's because the story is told through the viewpoints of two women who are on the periphery of the action. That, together with the focus on their romances, gives this book somewhat less heft than I expected. Still, it's a great way to absorb some of the history of the Cuban Revolution, along with a deeply felt and sometimes heart-wrenching story about love: both romantic love and love for one's country.

I also thought Chanel Cleeton, a Cuban American author, did an excellent job of showing the problems, shortcomings, hopes and desires of all of the different factions that play a role in the story. While she's coming, very understandably, from an anti-Castro position, she shows the injustice of the Batista government and the idealistic desires that many of the revolutionaries had. She also acknowledges the limitations in viewpoint of the Cubans who immigrated to America, a nuance that impressed me.

Havana slum

Next Year in Havana is a 2018 "Reese's Book Club" selection. Many thanks to Berkley Publishing for the review copy!

Content notes: some sexual content (view spoiler) but nothing at all explicit. Limited violence, also not graphic.

Jen says

I'm a sucker for Cuba. It's a destination of choice for a number of reasons including its history, its traditions, the people and of course, its coffee.

This story takes us through 2 story lines: 1959 and decades later to 2017. With 2 love stories.

After Marisol's grandmother passes, she has been left the daunting task of scattering her ashes over her home country, Cuba. We read her story through love letters left behind.

We are taken through the historical revolution and what it meant as a citizen to fight for Equality; never mind democracy. The moral dilemmas faced as a nation torn by radical leaders. And of the Cubans whom were forced into exile with only their personal belongings on their backs having to leave their homeland; and those who stayed with the hopes of change that never came to fruition.

Great history; fantastic writing. 4??

Julie says

Next Year in Havana by Chanel Cleeton is a 2018 Penguin/Berkley publication.

Cuba- 1958

Elisa Perez, a sugar heiress, falls in love with a revolutionary. But, their lives are so far removed from one another the relationship is one that seems doomed from the start. Sure enough, she and Pablo are separated, and Elisa's family fled to America, never to return to their beloved Cuba.

Fast forward to 2017-

“When I was younger, I begged my grandmother to tell me about Cuba. It was a mythical island, contained in my heart, entirely drawn from the version of Cuba she created in exile in Miami and the stories she shared with me. I was caught between two lands- two iterations of myself- the one I inhabited in my body and the one I lived in my dreams.”

Marisol's grandmother dies and to honor her last wishes, Marisol smuggles her ashes into Cuba. But, arriving in Cuba is only the beginning of her adventure. She must pick the perfect spot to spread her grandmother's ashes, so that end, she touches base with Elisa's best friend, hoping to gain some insight. This is how she meets Luis, who escorts her around the city and helps her play amateur detective as she searches for Pablo, the love of Elisa's life.

However, Luis's job as a professor has him under scrutiny and Marisol has been watched since she first stepped foot in Cuba. They begin to fall in love, playing a very dangerous game with their futures and maybe even their lives. Eventually they will face a heartbreaking fork in the road where they will both have to make the most difficult choice of their lives.

This story was absolutely amazing!! It's epic, grand, sweeping, emotional, and heart wrenching.

The family saga is told in bold, rich details, so vivid I felt like I was there taking in all the sights and sounds of Cuba. The atmosphere is heavy with foreboding and tension, danger always lurking in the shadows. Love,

at times, chooses the most inopportune moments to invade one's heart, but also has a knack for knowing just the right time and place, knowing somehow, somehow that it's now or never. Both scenarios come with hard choices and consequences.

The book is also very informative, giving readers an up close and personal look at what life is really like in Cuba. While I did find all of this very interesting, at times the 'lectures' or history lessons slowed the momentum of the story, but I still think readers need to absorb at least some of this information because this knowledge contributes to the high level of anguish and suspense that builds as the novel reaches its climax.

"The world as we know it has died, and I do not recognize the one that has taken its place"

This history also serves as a cautionary tale in many ways, but it is also very complicated, with people making choices they believed were the right ones to make at the time, while others clung to the way of life they had established, suddenly finding themselves in exile.

"You never know what's to come. That's the beauty of life. If everything happened the way we wished, the way we planned, we'd miss out on the best parts, the unexpected pleasure."

Naturally, for me, the love stories- plural- is what brought out the strongest emotions in me. Their stories parallel one another in many ways, with one being tragic and the other filled with danger- but also one filled with hope for a better outcome and maybe even a better way of life for those living in Cuba.

4 stars

Warda says

"The Americans preach liberty, and freedom , and democracy at home, and practice tyranny throughout the rest of the world."

Goodness, this book took my breath away.

I do not think I have the ability to express how much I loved it, and the impact the story had on me. There's so much to it, so much heart, soul and passion that leaped off those words and I was swept away at every moment.

I had no idea what to expect going into it, but it has become one of my favourite stories. It was so enlightening and eye-opening to read!

I loved getting to know the characters and how the political situation in Cuba formed not only the characters and their families, but the citizens in Cuba itself.

The historical aspect was beyond fascinating and Chanel Cleeton did a pretty perfect job at keeping my attention, because politics can be complex and hard to grasp. But the political commentaries were told with so much ease and understanding and not only one narrative was pushed. Every angle was looked at and I couldn't stop thinking. My brain was going haywire and I loved it. I loved getting to know what the country

was going through during such a tumultuous time in their period and seeing how that shaped the people. I was truly experiencing Cuba.

Now I want to read everything Chanel Cleeton writes! And read more on Latin America!

Ever since *The Nightingale*, I've been wanting to read more historical fiction novels. Buddy-reading with Sophie! ?

Diane S ? says

3.5 There are so many fantastic elements to this novel. The book opens with the Perez family fleeing Cuba after the revolution. This is the first thread of the story. The second is Elise Perez's granddaughter Marisol, traveling to Cuba, sixty years later to scatter her ashes in the country she had loved.

The history of Cuba, Batista, Che and Castro are told in bold, detailed fashion using the Perez family to add a human element and interest to the story. This story would be my favorite part of the book, a look back at what happened to the Perez family, and a revolution that promised much but delivered little. Said to have ended Batista's cruelty, in effect, in one quote by the author, it just replaced one dictator with another.

Marisol would find love in Havana but also many other things she didn't know she was looking for. Again the descriptions of Havana we're done well, but that in one week two people would fall in love, was a bit unbelievable. I enjoyed the characters, the different looks at the people who fled Cuba, and those who stayed. There are a few surprises along the way, in this very readable book. Things may be more open in Cuba but as the book shows the danger for some is far from over.

Very well written, the history, thankfully for me but maybe all readers will not feel the same, overshadowed the love story. The ending poignant, heartfelt but a little too pat. All in all a good read about a country of which I am still learning.

ARC from Netgalley.

**Patty Belongs To Kellan~Jesse~Lautner~Miller~Jack~Racer~Rafe~Liam~Prince
Nicholas~Hayes~Simon~Gianluca & Archer says**

*******FOUR STARS*******

{ARC Generously Provided by Author}

In one step, I know power, the drugging effect of it coursing through my veins. With one step I am

removed from the fringes and thrust in the middle of my life. In that space of the step, my world shifts. Everything is different now, and nothing will ever be the same again.

NEXT YEAR IN HAVANA is beautifully written and at times excessive in the detailed description of the surroundings and landscape of Cuba and its inhabitants. It did enable me to picture a Country I will never get to see in my lifetime and in that aspect, I did appreciate the descriptive narrative. This read more like a history book than a romance. While there are two sets of couples, they seemed to play a secondary role to that of the main characters which were Cuba and its history of unrest and rebellion.

The story switches from past to present. The past being 1958-59 Havana, where Elisa Perez lives with her parents and sisters. In the present, Elisa's granddaughter, Marisol Ferrera, is on a journey from Miami to Cuba where she has been assigned the task to spread her grandmother's ashes. Although having been exiled from Cuba for nearly sixty years, Elisa always yearned for a chance to someday return to the Country she called "*home*". When she was nineteen she fled Cuba with her family after Fidel Castro came into power. Her family was one of the wealthiest and powerful in Havana and a prime target for Castro.

Marisol was very close to her grandmother and her death affected Marisol deeply. She knows that it still isn't safe for her to be going to Cuba but is determined to fulfill her grandmother's dying wish. She's also excited to be going to the place that her grandmother spent so many nights telling stories about. Marisol embraces her heritage. When she meets Ana Rodriguez, Elisa's childhood best friend, Marisol is given a box that Elisa left behind. What she discovers inside is a secret that Elisa took with her to her grave and Marisol questions whether she ever truly knew her grandmother. Marisol sets off on a mission to uncover her grandmother's secret past and along the way finds her own romance with Luis, a history professor at the University of Cuba and also Ana's grandson.

During flashbacks, we learn how Elisa meets her one true love and how a happily ever after for them is nearly impossible. When we are back in the present we see that history is repeating itself with Marisol and Luis.

Will Marisol have the HEA that her grandmother was unable to attain?

Here are my overall ratings on the book:

Heroes: 4

Heroines: 4

Plot: 4

Angst: 3

Steam: 2

Chemistry Between Hero & Heroine: 3

NEXT YEAR IN HAVANA releases tomorrow.

Book Links:

Amazon: <http://amzn.to/2pdQBKF>

Barnes & Noble: <http://bit.ly/2pYsJJY>

iBooks: <http://apple.co/2pvYffq>

IndieBound: <http://bit.ly/2zrt11m>

Kobo: <http://bit.ly/2wPZPMU>

Dem says

3.5 Stars

I love books where the protagonist tries to discover the roots of her identity and and this is what drew me to this novel. I enjoyed Chanel Cleeton's Next year in Havana as it took me on a journey to Cuba which a country I have read very little about and by the conclusion of this Historical Fiction Novel I had gained a little historical insight into Cuba and now look forward to reading some more books on Cuba in the near future.

"After the death of her beloved Grandmother, a Cuban-American woman travels to Havan where she discovered the roots of her identify and unearths a family secret hidden since the revolution."

This is a romance style novel but it does give a little insight into Cuban history and the revolution which is insightful and interesting, enough information to wet my appetite and kept me interested throughout the story. The Novel is set in two time frames and this works quite well. I preferred the historical story. The author explores the themes of family, love, loss and sacrifices and while I enjoyed the book I did find it a little repetitive and quite a bit forced in places and I found the ending a little too contrived.

Overall an easy read, nice sense of time and place and a book that many historical fiction readers will enjoy.

Lucy Langford says

4.5****

"Next year in Havana- It's the toast we never stop saying, because the dream of it never comes true."

This book had a dual time line; one in 1958 featuring Elisa, the daughter of an important sugar baron. She is part of Cuba's high society largely sheltered from the country's political unrest with the expectation to marry another man within her social class.

When she meets a revolutionary one night she embarks on a forbidden passion which opens her mind and leads to discussions of the revolution.

Switching to Miami, 2007, Marisol is a freelance writer who is grieving the loss of her late grandmother, Elisa. Marisol has been told romantic stories from her grandmother of what Cuba was like, before Elisa and her family had to flee from the revolution. As a dying wish, Elisa put in her will that she wished Marisol to spread her ashes in Cuba.

Arriving in Havana, Marisol is taken aback by the beauty and romantics of Cuba... but also, is brought to attention the dire straits in which its people live in due to its dangerous political and social climate. Marisol discovers more about her grandmother and family secrets whilst also embarking on her own love affair who has his own secrets.

During the process of reading this book I was completely captured by the beauty of Havana. This book was deeply atmospheric that it was not hard to imagine all the bright colours, smells of food, and inescapable heat. I was also fascinated to learn of a country I know nothing about and its rising political tensions and abhorrent behaviour from those 'in charge'. This gave a comprehensive account of the revolution and the effects this has had on the Cuban people, leaving a deep sadness but also hope for persistence for change.

I found the female character's in this were so courageous and resilient, this includes both minor and major character's and were completely multi-faceted. I especially enjoyed the courageous and head strong Beatriz Perez and cannot wait for the next book featuring this interesting character.

I found this book difficult to put down and was an absorbing read. This was also largely different to what I usually read due to its romantic elements, but the climatic descriptions, the strain of a revolution and societal unrest kept me ensnared in the plot.

Susanne Strong says

4 Stars.

Family, Heartache, History, Life, Loss and Love. This is the story of “Next Year in Havana” by Chanel Cleeton.

Cuba, 1958: Elisa Perez is a nineteen year old heiress when she meets Pablo, at a dinner party. Their chemistry is immediate and undeniable. It is love at first sight and it is doomed. Pablo is a revolutionary, he stands for everything her family is against and yet neither can walk away from their feelings. When things go awry, Elisa and her family have no choice but to escape to Miami, never to return.

Miami, 2017: Elisa’s last wish was to have her ashes spread in Havana, by her granddaughter, Marisol. After arriving in Cuba, Marisol meets Elisa’s best friend Ana and Ana’s grandson Luis. There, Marisol learns of Elisa’s past, through letters Elisa wrote to Pablo and Marisol discovers that her grandmother had a life she knew nothing about.

Marisol has always identified as Cuban, though she realizes that being a Cuban-American in Havana, she is considered an outsider. Ana and Luis however, treat her like a part of the family and when Luis looks at her, she feels like she is home. He is passionate about his country, his people and justice. To her, he is an enigma, he teaches her about Cuba, life and love. On her journey, Marisol learns as much about her grandmother as she does about herself.

In this novel, Chanel Cleeton expertly intertwines a story about family, love and loss with historical fiction. In my opinion, there were several parallels between Elisa and Marisol’s lives. For me, I was able to identify with Elisa’s life, though it takes place in the late 1950’s. I also found her story to be more believable than her granddaughters.

“Next Year in Havana” also showcases Cuban history and gave me some insight that I didn’t have previously. Over the years, Cubans fought, trading one dictator for another: Batista, Che & Castro and the revolution continued. In truth, there were no winners. People fled their homeland, never to return. Even now, Cubans do not have the freedom and the luxuries that Americans do. It is a reminder of all of the things that I take for granted every day.

Overall, this is an incredibly beautiful story, rich in history, full of life and love. I had a feeling of what this novel would be like going into it, just by looking at the gorgeous cover, and the novel did not disappoint!

A huge thank you to Natalie at Berkley Publishing Group and Chanel Cleeton for a complimentary copy of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

Published on Goodreads, Amazon and Twitter on 9.9.18.

Liz says

4.5 stars, rounded up.

As a voracious reader and reviewer, I'm in favor of anything that promotes books and creates more interest in them. So, I view the proliferation of celebrity book clubs as a good thing. This is Reese Witherspoon's July BOMC selection. And it's a very worthy one.

The book starts with the Perez family leaving Cuba after the success of the revolution. It quickly switches to Marisol Ferrera returning to Cuba 58 years later with her grandmother's ashes. Cleeton paints that picture of Cuba quickly and impressively. Things we take for granted, everything from seat belts to fancy pots and pans, are missing, everything is in some state of disrepair.

The story alternates between the grandmother Elisa's last year in Cuba as a nineteen year old and Marisol's return.

The book gives us a background of what it was like in that last year of Batista being in power. "Very few can afford the luxury of being political in Cuba." "And no one can afford the luxury of not being political in Cuba." And, of course, it also shows you, through Marisol's eyes, how poorly that revolution turned out and how the people are still being oppressed. I loved the contrast between the vision of the Cubans that left, living with memories, and those that stayed, living with facts. "Even though we share the same heritage, as hard as I search for commonalities between us, as much as I want to belong here, the differences are glaring. I am Cuban and yet, I am not."

I could have done without the modern romance. It seemed unnecessary to me. But I loved how much Havana and Cuba was a love interest for all concerned. "Havana is a beautiful city shrouded in sadness, yet the remarkable thing is that it's almost as if the people didn't get the memo. They laugh, and there's a jubilant quality to the air... The Cubans probably have the least to laugh about compared to everyone around them, but they laugh the loudest."

I knew of the Revolution, but what I didn't know was the horrors that occurred after Castro came to power. It gave me a new insight into why the Cubans in the US are so bitter. Not just the loss of property, but the high loss of life. "We are Rome and this is the Coliseum."

What's interesting is that this book can be read as much more than a romantic story or historical fiction. It delves into the need to stand up to injustice. Of not turning a blind eye to corruption if it doesn't immediately affect you. The danger of being silent and creating deals with the devil.

My thanks to Berkeley Publishing that provided me with a copy of this novel.

Melanie says

ARC provided by Berkley in exchange for an honest review.

"We carry our home with us in our hearts, laden with hope. So much hope."

Next Year in Havana is such an amazing book that had me crying all the happy tears, all the sad tears, and all

the in-between tears. I feel like this ownvoices book, that Chanel Cleeton crafted, took a piece of my heart, and I'm fine living without it, because this book was such a work of art, inside and out. And this beautiful story is told in two different timelines from two different women.

► **Elisa** - Who is living in 1958 Havana, which is constantly unsafe. Elisa has lived a more privileged life than most, because her family is wealthy, and her father works under the current president, Batista. But the people aren't happy, and Fidel Castro and his revolutionary followers are on the rise. No one is safe, and Elisa realizes very quickly that her heart isn't safe either.

► **Marisol** - Who is living in 2017 Miami, but currently taking a trip to Havana to lay Elisa's ashes to rest, in the city that always had her heart. Even after being forced to leave so many years ago. Marisol sees first hand that impact that Fidel Castro has left on Cuba when her grandmother and her family were forced to flee.

“Love feels like a luxury in a world where so many struggle for the basic things I take for granted.”

And each timeline follows a different heart-wrenching and heart-mending romance. And these two stories interweave together to create something more beautiful than I have words for. I was so addicted, and I couldn't stop turning the pages.

This book is also so atmospheric. I felt like I was alongside both of these girls in Cuba. And I could feel the sad, heartbreaking reality of what Cuba was like in 1950, and what it is still like in almost 2020. I was born and raised in the United States, and it just made me even more aware of my privilege. It also made me side-eye my country a bit more than usual, too.

“The Americans preach liberty, and freedom, and democracy at home, and practice tyranny throughout the rest of the world.”

And one of my favorite aspects of this book was Marisol bringing up her thoughts and feelings about being biracial and feeling equal parts like an outsider and like at home while she is in Cuba. I'm a lot more white passing than Marisol, but the things she deals with and feels when she travels to Cuba, is something so real and something so very close to my Filipina heart.

“My grandparents are Cuban, my father Cuban, therefore I am Cuban. But will it matter here that my skin is lighter than many of the country's citizens, that my blood is not fully Cuban? Am I an outsider here or is the ancestry I claim enough?”

I also loved how this book celebrates all the different types of love we will have during our lifetime. Love that we will never forget. Love from second chances at love that will make us feel whole again. Love between friends who will never forget us. Love between people who are family, no matter the blood that runs through our veins. Love for a country that never loved back.

Okay, so this book was amazing, but I did have two minor things that were the reason I didn't give this five stars. The first being, it was very predictable to me. I mean, that didn't stop all the tears from coming, but I

knew where this was going as soon as Elisa snuck out with her sisters. The next being Elisa's father/Marisol's grandpa. Like, damn, I understand why, but what a dick. And I personally always really dislike the "miscommunication" trope, even though I loved this book with my whole heart.

"When you love something you don't count the cost."

And overall, I recommend this book to any and every book lover. And I think this was such a wonderful pick for Reese's book club! And I cannot wait to see where Chanel Cleeton takes Beatriz's story in *When We Left Cuba* in 2019!

Blog | Instagram | Twitter | Tumblr | Youtube | Twitch

Trigger and content warnings for loss of a loved one, abandonment, and war themes. Also, off-screen captivity, torture, and murder.

The quotes above were taken from an ARC and are subject to change upon publication.

If you would have told little kid bookworm Melanie that Berkley would one day send her a book because it's July's pick for Reese Witherspoon's future book club, she would not have believed you. (And probably ran, because I was a paranoid kid and I would have thought you were a kidnapper, but still!) ?

Carol (Bookaria) says

A familiar yet **unique story, deeply evocative, and mesmerizing**. I devoured this book and enjoyed every sentence.

The story is told in my favorite form of narration, alternating points of view and timelines. The novel begins in the days when the Cuban revolution started and travels to the present times when Marisol visits Cuba to scatter her grandmother's ashes on the beloved land she left behind many years ago.

"We are silk and lace, and beneath them we are steel."

The author did a great job at describing Cuba, the Cuba of "then" and the Cuba of "now", its places, the land, I felt I was there with the characters and emotionally connected to the story from the beginning.

I hope this is the first in a series because there are many secondary characters with interesting backstories that I want to get to know, specially, Beatriz' story.

Overall, this was an **amazing book**. I highly recommend it.

Chelsea (chelseadolling reads) says

This was such an enthralling read. It was really well written and also extremely eye opening???? I learned SO MANY THINGS about Cuba that I had no idea about before and it definitely makes me want to research

and learn more. Also: v steamy romances!

Miranda Reads says

"I promised I would never see you again."

"So this is good-bye, then?"

"No."

Elisa Perez, daughter of a sugar baron in Cuba, had a **vastly different life** from her granddaughter, Marisol Ferrera.

Elisa's world is of **wealth, and intrigue**. Tabloid newspapers and quiet, refined lives. She knows what to expect in her life - **courtship, marriage and then children** (undoubtedly, in that order).

We are useless birds in a gilded cage...

But soon, the Cuban rebellion against Batista impacts even her quiet, sheltered life - in the form of **one, unforgettable revolutionary**.

Pablo leans into me...My heartbeat thrums, equal parts nerves and anticipation running through my veins

Many years later, Marisol is tasked with returning to Cuba to scatter her grandmother (Elisa)'s ashes.

Marisol spent her childhood in her grandmother's care and thus was raised on **Cuban stories, food and culture**. But hearing about Cuba and actually visiting it are two very different things.

Despite her worry and misgivings, Marisol decides to take the plunge and visit the **world that had only existed in her imagination**.

It's funny how that little step can change everything...

And, much like her grandmother, Marisol finds **love in an unexpected and rebellious place**.

"I am not afraid to die for what I believe in."

"Maybe not, but what does your death accomplish?"

Oh. My. Gosh. This one just swept me off my feet.

I read this one for the **Reese Witherspoon Book Club** - and all I can say is, wow. She sure knows how to pick them!

I was **absolutely enthralled** with the way the author wove together the two narratives - the back-and-forth between Elisa and Marisol was just perfect!

In addition, the author **brought Cuba to life** using both the perspective of Elisa (who lived there all her life) and Marisol (who was discovering the magic all along). Thus leaving me with a desperate need to visit it

myself.

Now, the book was a bit slow in the beginning but don't let that dissuade you. It really picks up towards the middle - and that ending was on fire. **I just couldn't put it down!**

Excuse me, I need to check out everything this author has ever written!

with thanks to Berkley Publishing for a free copy in exchange for an honest review

Blog / Instagram / Twitter

Angela M says

I always enjoy knowing an author's inspiration for a story. In the acknowledgments, which introduce the book, Chanel Cleeton call this "the book of my heart" and thanks her family for sharing their stories. It wasn't until I heard her in an interview relating a story that her father told her about how people would put their valuables in boxes and bury the box before they left Cuba, that I knew the specific thing. This seemed to reflect a hope that they would someday return. A box buried by a young girl as she and her family flee Cuba in 1958 is a meaningful part of this novel. I loved knowing that this was the spark that started this story and that she is connected to the narrative because her family did indeed flee Cuba after the revolution.

In Havana, in the late 1950s we meet Elisa from an affluent family, sugar barons as they are leaving Cuba. This narrative alternates with her granddaughter Marisol's in 2017 as she goes to Cuba to spread her grandmother's ashes. The past story is a love story where the political history of Cuba in the late 1950s is played out. I have to admit how little I really knew about this complicated history from the not too distant past. That made it all the more interesting to me.

On one level you could read this as a love story and then there is another love story in the present day (which is not as believable as the earlier one) or you could see the history and the politics, the Cuba of the past and present through these relationships. A story of family ties, love, and friendship woven into the politics and history of pre-revolutionary Cuba connecting it to the present day. Loyalty, love of country , the dangerous business of beliefs contrary to those in power told with the natural beauty of the island as the backdrop and the ambiance of Havana. I felt confident of the details of the politics given that the author has academic degrees in international politics. I thoroughly enjoyed this even with an ending that was a little too pat. It was well written and appealed to me from the beginning to the end.

I received an advanced copy of this book from Berkeley through NetGalley.
