



Loving Che: A Novel

By Ana Menéndez

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A young Cuban woman has been searching in vain for details of her birth mother. All she knows of her past is that her grandfather fled the turbulent Havana of the 1960s for Miami with her in tow, and that pinned to her sweater-possibly by her mother-were a few treasured lines of a Pablo Neruda poem. These facts remain her only tenuous links to her history, until a mysterious parcel arrives in the mail. Inside the soft, worn box are layers of writings and photographs. Fitting these pieces together with insights she gleans from several trips back to Havana, the daughter reconstructs a life of her mother, her youthful affair with the dashing, charismatic Che Guevara and the child she bore by the enigmatic rebel. *Loving Che* is a brilliant recapturing of revolutionary Cuba, the changing social mores, the hopes and disappointments, the excitement and terror of the times. It is also an erotic fantasy, a glimpse into the private life of a mythic public figure, and an exquisitely crafted meditation on memory, history, and storytelling. Finally, *Loving Che* is a triumphant unveiling of how the stories we tell about others ultimately become the story of ourselves.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this evocative first novel by short story writer Menendez (*In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*), a young, unnamed Miami woman is granted an intimate look into her provenance with the arrival of a package of old photographs and letters. An infant during the revolution, she was sent from Cuba to be raised by her kind but unforthcoming grandfather; her mother, Teresa, seems to have vanished. But this package of writings "smell[ing] of dark drawers and musty rooms" reveals Teresa de la Landre's life, from her carefree girlhood to her marriage, artistic career and impassioned affair with revolutionary hero Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Teresa's poetic memories, which make up the bulk of the book, are rich in sensual detail ("Ernesto... his touch like wading into a small pool only to find it deep and cool and sweet beneath the reflection") and full of the terror and exhilaration of revolution ("After the triumph... it was the strange and dreadful excitement of a world turning, of everything staid and ordinary being swept away"). Despite the tension in the narrator's search to learn her mother's fate and the true identity of her father—was it Che, or Teresa's professor husband, Calixto?—the present-day story, which bookends the letters, is less developed. The dreamy portrait of tropical Havana in gorgeous decay ("Where the cement had cracked, small purple flowers blossomed, as if every house held a garden prisoner within its walls") lingers, while the narrator's hopeful but pragmatic thoughts during her quest can fall somewhat flat. Still, the glimpses of vibrant 1950s Cuba and Teresa and Che's perfectly rendered relationship make this a moving novel from a writer to watch.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Critics agree that *Loving Che* does not live up to the wide acclaim of Menéndez's short story collection, *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*. In *Loving Che* the former journalist attempts a more ornate and less journalistic style, which does not quite succeed. Reviewers praise her poetic language and sensual descriptions of Cuba but note that her emphasis on Che's romantic life comes at the expense of solid historical and political context. Important events serve only to illustrate the phases of Che and Teresa's affair, which, in the end, resembles a bodice-ripper romance. If you're not a fan of historical romance novels, the consensus is: wait for Menéndez's next effort.

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From [Booklist](#)

Menendez, author of the superb short story collection *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* (2001), once again brings the Cuban experience to life in her first novel. A woman goes to Cuba in search of information about her lost mother, whom she never knew, but returns empty handed. However, she soon receives a mysterious package full of hastily written letters and pictures of charismatic rebel Che Guevara. What follows is the story of Theresa, an artist from a wealthy background who eventually loses her heart to Che, an unlikely lover. The backdrop to their romance is Cuba during the Revolution—burning cars, coups, dwindling resources. Che visits Theresa often, and together they face a world of harsh realities. As the narrator realizes that Theresa is her mother and Che is her father, Cuba is born anew in her eyes, for a man she was brought up to revile is suddenly revealed to be her father. She returns to Cuba with renewed zeal, and its legends become the story of her life. *Michael Spinella*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donald Howard:

Hey guys, do you wish to find a new book to see? Maybe the book with the concept Loving Che: A Novel suitable to you? The particular book was written by a well-known writer in this era. The particular book titled Loving Che: A Novel is one of several books that everyone reads now. This specific book was inspired a lot of people in the world. When you read this book you will enter the new dimension that you never knew just before. The author explained their plan in a simple way, and so all of people can easily recognize the core of this guide. This book will give you a lot of information about this world now. So you can see the representation of the world in this particular book.

Eva Dawson:

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Ruth McMillian:

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Christopher Williams:

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