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Out of Cuba: Memoir of a Journey

Regina Anavy

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OUT OF CUBA Memoir of a Journey is an inspirational story about a woman who embraces a challenge to help a Cuban man change his destiny. Together, they struggle to overcome political and cultural obstacles, as they create a family bond and transform despair into hope.The text presents a more complex view of Cuba than is usually given in the American media. The narrative will resonate with anyone who has helped someone escape from oppression, and anyone who has had to leave home in order to have a future. The story shows how love, cooperation, and perseverance can change lives. The reader will come away with a renewed appreciation for the human spirit. Anavy, a Jewish woman who grew up in the Midwest, recounts her youthful involvement in radical politics. In 1971, she travels to Cuba illegally, to cut sugarcane with the Fourth Venceremos Brigade, in support of Fidel Castro's Ten Million Ton Harvest. This was the first brigade to allow participants from the Gay Liberation Movement, and Anavy, although not gay herself, soon is appalled by the aggressive prejudice against homosexuals, on the part of both the Cubans and the other brigadistas. Everyone, she comes to think, is obsessed with being more-revolutionary-than-thou, and her disillusion with the reality of the Revolution leads to a sense of alienation. She returns home with a new found appreciation for the liberties in the U.S. Thirty years later, Anavy goes to Cuba as a tourist. She finds herself drawn to the intelligence and bravery of Teseo, her tour guide, and they form a friendship. He ultimately confides that he is desperate to leave the island, the only way he can imagine a hopeful future. Remembering how someone helped her Jewish grandparents escape the pogroms in Russia, Anavy promises to help him. She will be the Ariadne who helps Theseus out of the labyrinth. Out of Cuba describes Anavy's subsequent travels to Cuba, all journeys part of the secret plan to take this man to freedom. As she comes to know the culture of the island, she begins to scrutinize the dynamics of the organized tours and humanitarian trips that are licensed by the U.S. government, and contrasts them with the real conditions in Cuba that tourists aren't supposed to see. The text presents a more complex view of Cuba than is usually given in the American media. The narrative will resonate with anyone who has helped someone escape from oppression, and anyone who has had to leave home in order to have a future. The story shows how love, cooperation, and perseverance can change lives. The reader will come away with a renewed appreciation for the human spirit.

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