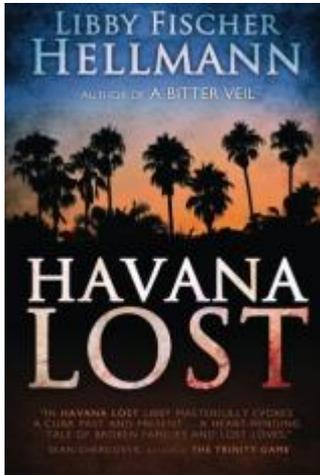


Havana Lost

by Libby Fischer Hellmann



About the Book

On the eve of the Cuban Revolution, headstrong 18-year-old Francesca Pacelli flees from her ruthless Mafia-boss father in Havana to the arms of her lover, a rebel fighting with Fidel Castro. Her father, desperate to send her to safety in the US, resorts to torture and blackmail as he searches the island for her.

So begins the first part of a spellbinding saga that spans three generations of the same family. Decades later, the family is lured back to Cuba by the promise of untold riches. But pursuing those riches brings danger as well as opportunity, and ultimately, Francesca's family must confront the lethal consequences of their choices. From the troubled streets of Havana to the mean streets of Chicago, HAVANA LOST reveals the true cost of chasing power instead of love.

HAVANA LOST is award-winning author Libby Fischer Hellmann's 10th novel and third thriller that explores how strife and revolution affect the human spirit. The novel is a testament to Hellmann's gift for authentic historical detail as well as her talent for writing compulsively readable thrillers.

Discussion Guide

1. Do you remember/or have you studied the Cuban Revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power? If so, what is your opinion? How do you explain the cold war?
2. Did you know the Mafia (Meyer Lansky et al) had such a significant presence in Havana? What do you think about their relationship with Batista? What about their casino and resort operations?
3. Did the US exploit Cuba in the 1950s? Were the revolutionaries justified in their actions?
4. How does revolution affect individuals? Families? Cities? Culture?
5. Should Luis have forgiven Ramon for telling Tony Pacelli where Luis and Francesca were? Was Luis wise or foolish?
6. If you had to use five words to describe Cuban society during their Special Period in the 1990's, what would they be? Do you think these words are different from the ones you would have used before reading this book?
7. Were you surprised by Francesca Pacelli's actions, particularly in Part 3? Do you think her behavior was influenced by what happened to her as a young woman and mother, or was it simply her inbred personality?

8. The theme of family is key to this book. If Francesca and Michael had not had such difficult relationships with their parents, how might the story have been different?
9. Is there a hero or heroine in this book? Who is it? Why?
10. Do you think that American authors should write novels about other countries? How do you think their perspective as an author flavors their work?
11. Francesca and Carla were very different people. Why was Michael attracted to Carla? Did Francesca treat her well?
12. How would you handle yourself had you been in Francesca's situation? What about Carla's?
13. How do you think Francesca will feel about her life when she looks back on it? What other choices could she have made? Why didn't she?
14. Did Ramon change over the years? How?
15. What is the significance of the title HAVANA LOST?
16. Many Americans know Cubans who were forced to leave their homeland when Castro assumed power. How have the exiles' attitudes affected American policy toward Cuba? Are they justified or simply "sore losers?"
17. Has this novel given you any appreciation for Cuba's 100% literacy rate, their national health care system, subsidized housing, and free education system? Or are the problems inherent in a socialist system too harsh? Would you like to learn more about Cuba? In what areas?
18. Should the US drop the embargo? Should American corporations be allowed to set up operations in Cuba once again?
19. What do you know about African natural resources and the struggles to control them? How important is that part of the world to you?
20. If your computer could only function with coltan from Africa, and it was acquired in an illegal way, would that bother you? Why or why not?
21. Who was your favorite character in HAVANA LOST? Why?

Author Bio

Libby Fischer Hellmann writes Compulsively Readable Thrillers. Her 13th novel, JUMP CUT, the fifth entry in her Ellie Foreman series, was released in March 2016 and won a Starred Review from *Publishers Weekly*.

In 2014, HAVANA LOST, a stand-alone literary thriller and love story set in Cuba, was released. A BITTER VEIL, set in revolutionary Iran during the late '70s was released in 2013. Along with SET THE NIGHT ON FIRE (2010), which goes back to the late '60s in Chicago, these stand-alone thrillers are what Libby calls her *Revolution Trilogy*.

She also writes two crime fiction series. Libby describes the first, the Ellie Foreman series, soon to be a five-volume set, as a cross between "Desperate Housewives" and "24." Chicago P.I. Georgia Davis first appeared in one of those novels, and she now has her own series, which has grown to four volumes.

Libby has also published over 20 short stories, many of them in NICE GIRL DOES NOIR. She also edited the acclaimed crime fiction anthology CHICAGO BLUES. Her most recent novella (2015) was THE INCIDENTAL SPY, a World War II story about the early years of the Manhattan Project in Chicago. She is currently working on another WWII novella, tentatively titled HOMEFRONT.

Originally from Washington D.C., she has lived in Chicago over 35 years and claims they'll take her out of there feet first.

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