



## Lima Nights: A Novel

By Marie Arana



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Carlos Bluhm leads the good life in upper-class Lima: He attends social functions with his elegant wife, goes out drinking with his three best friends, and has the occasional, fleeting assignation. Then he meets Maria Fernandez, a dancer at a tango bar in a rough part of town. The beautiful fifteen-year-old intoxicates him. An indigenous dark-skinned Peruvian, she represents everything his safe white world does not, and soon he can't get her out of his mind. They begin a passionate affair, one that will destroy his marriage and shatter the only reality he's ever known.

Flash forward twenty years: Against all odds, Carlos and Maria have remained together. But when Maria finally presses for a formal commitment, feelings long suppressed erupt in a tense endgame that sends both of them hurtling toward a dangerous resolution that will forever alter their lives.

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## **Lima Nights: A Novel** By Marie Arana Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Set in Peru's capital city, this spare, unsentimental novel examines the far-reaching and life-changing consequences of sexual obsession. Carlos Bluhm, a married father of two, is enjoying an outing at a sleazy club in 1986 when he meets 15-year-old Juana Maria Fernandez, a dancer working two jobs and living in the slums. Maria is the polar opposite of Carlos's Germanic wife, Sophie, and he is immediately captivated by her. After Carlos takes Maria away for an illicit vacation, Sophie discovers her husband's affair and moves her sons, her mother-in-law and all of the house's possessions while Bluhm is on vacation with his mistress, leaving Bluhm to come home to an empty house. The second half of the book flashes forward 20 years, revealing Carlos and Maria uneasily living together and beginning to drift apart. Trying to preserve the lifestyle she's come to depend upon, Maria makes desperate attempts to keep Carlos under her spell. While the story ends with a whimper, the finely tuned human drama and subversion of the happily-ever-after drive home the setup's inherent sadness. (*Dec.*)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

In some respects, *Lima Nights* is an age-old story about the usual doomed love affair. In others, the tale is not so typical: as Arana delves deep inside her characters to explore Peru's class, social, and generational tensions, an unpredictable story unfolds. While critics disagreed about the relative success of the first half of the novel (which takes place in 1986) versus the second (the present-day story), they concurred that Arana deftly limns the relationship between Carlos and Maria and the changes and power struggles that emerge over time. A couple of critics faulted the characterizations and language ("forced and wooden," said the *Rocky Mountain News*), but overall, *Lima Nights* is a beautiful, mournful novel about the deceptions of love. Copyright 2009 Bookmarks Publishing LLC

From [Booklist](#)

**\*Starred Review\*** Arana follows the panoramic *Cellophane* (2006) with a concentrated tale of love, prejudice, and terror. Lima is in the grip of the Shining Path nightmare in 1986, when Carlos and Maria meet in a dance club. A teenage beauty working two jobs to support her ailing mother and brothers, Maria lures Carlos, of German descent and middle-class complacency, onto the dance floor for a tango lesson, the first session in an ultimately harrowing course in suffering. Ensnared in his grandfather's spacious, fancy house, Carlos is adored by his good mother, upright wife, and two fine sons. He isn't making much money and should not be out carousing, although he insists to himself that he has no intention of getting entangled in a serious affair. But wildly alive Maria enchants him, while she hopes that her golden lover will rescue her from slum life. Writing with intensity and precision, Arana forges an unrelenting drama of lust and betrayal profoundly complicated by racism and fear, magic and spirituality. An erotic, catastrophic love story that grows more mysterious by the page, Arana's novel of taboo passion, tragic misperception, and life's hidden dimensions is as shattering as it is seductive. --Donna Seaman

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Emilio Lutz:**

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### **Laura Hill:**

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