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Foreword Review HISTORY

Marita: The Spy Who Loved Castro

Marita Lorenz
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Every event is like a tabloid headline in this engrossing memoir, written by a former spy.

Who killed John F. Kennedy? If you elect to believe Marita Lorenz—who survived Bergen-Belsen, abandonment in the Amazon, and torrid affairs with more than one dictator—then answers lie with agents of espionage.

The CIA did it; she was practically there. Lorenz delivers such revelations matter-of-factly in *Marita: The Spy Who Loved Castro*, and while her larger-than-life experiences are world-moving enough to invite incredulity, the seductive nature of her memoir is this: you'll want to believe her anyway.

By seven, Marita had already endured more tragedy than most people experience in a lifetime. The result was, perhaps, a lack of fear about her own mortality; by the time she met Fidel Castro, the nineteen year-old was bold enough to invite him and his armed contingent aboard her father's ship, to introduce herself as the honorary captain, and to fall almost immediately into his arms.

The affair made her vulnerable in more ways than one. She found herself drawn in to mob-and-government plots to undermine the Cuban leader. She rubbed shoulders with Lee Harvey Oswald and the architects of the Watergate break-in. Later, she was thrust into relationships with former dictators and mob bigwigs; she details them without shame. "Sex with [Marcos Pérez Jiménez] wasn't wonderful or even good," she announces. "I certainly couldn't compare it to sex with Fidel."

One baby came, and then another; she weathered several close shaves with death. Film deals and bankruptcies marked her later life. Every chapter relates a noteworthy event, and she delivers her stories in unabashed detail.

Lorenz's presentation casts her as a perpetual innocent, manipulated and easily seduced; sure, the men she meets and loves are notorious, but they seemed nice enough to her, their murderous reputations aside. Can we help who we love? This wide-eyed quality makes her both an appealing and a frustrating narrator, whose charm persists nearly to the end. Still, the abundance of historical events and personalities to which she was either a witness or an accomplice make hers an irresistible story.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September/October 2017)

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