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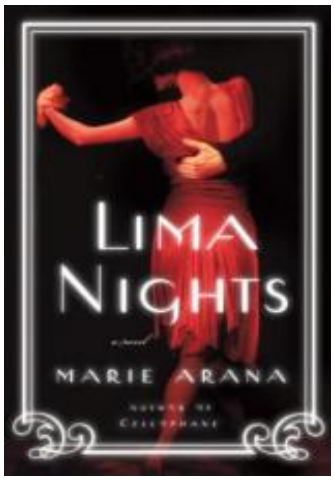
Lima Nights

by Marie Arana



About the Book

A vibrant literary talent, National Book Award-finalist Marie Arana has won acclaim from critics coast-to-coast. With **Lima Nights,** she delivers a provocative portrait of erotic obsession in a tale of unlikely lovers who dangerously gamble on passion. Carlos Bluhm lives a conventional life in upper-class Lima, providing his wife and children with a comfortable haven, seemingly sheltered from the city?s political unrest. Then he meets an astonishingly beautiful dancer named Maria Fernandez. Indigenous and dark-skinned, she lives in the poverty-stricken shadows of his world, working at a tango bar and wise beyond her sixteen years. As their affair escalates, everything Bluhm and Maria have believed about themselves begins to change. At the moment of his greatest deception, he achieves ultimate bliss, not realizing it will cost him everything in the end. An unforgettable love story, **Lima Nights** unfolds like a tango: seductive and enchanting, and laced with dramatic turns.

Discussion Guide

1. What are Bluhm?s first impressions of Maria, both at Lima Nights and at the supermarket? What makes her different from the other women he has known? How did your impressions of Maria, and of Bluhm, change throughout the novel?

2. Discuss the time period and history captured in **Lima Nights.** What had you known about the Shining Path guerrillas?

3. Do the vast differences between Maria and Bluhm?especially in terms of age, race, and economic status?strengthen their attraction for each other? How do their differences help and hinder their relationship?

4. How do Maria?s memories of her parents influence her beliefs about love and survival?

5. Discuss Maria and Bluhm?s sublime beach trip to Paracas. Was he deceiving himself as much as he deceived his wife, or did he find his true self during those passionate days and nights? How does their trip compare to your ideal romantic

escape?

6. What do Maria and Sophie mean to Bluhm? When he compares them on a list, what qualities seem more important to him? How important is sex in building a healthy marriage?

7. How does Bluhm relate to his two sons, Fritz and Rudy? What does he try to teach them about being good men? What do they, in turn, teach him?

8. What emotional shifts take place between the first and second parts of **Lima Nights**? Were you surprised to see Maria and Bluhm still together in ?Mano a Mano??

9. What makes the tango the perfect dance for Bluhm and Maria?s mutual seduction? What illusions did they create when they first became lovers? How did they stay in step with each other as things became more turbulent?

10. What truths does **Lima Nights** reveal about relationships and longing? Would you have responded to infidelity the same way Sophie did?

11. Was Bluhm?s obsession with Maria the cause of his marital problems, or was it a symptom? How did his desire for Maria compare to Willy?s feelings for Carmela?

12. Is there much difference between the services offered by Oscar and those offered by the *vidente*? Which one has better insight? How do both healers affect the minds of their clients?

13. How did you interpret the presence of the old man who helps carry Bluhm?s curse out to sea? Is his presence a coincidence, divine intervention, or something else altogether?

14. What does the closing scene say about Bluhm?s house and all that it represented to him at the various stages of his life? What do you predict for him, and for Maria?

15. What elements of **Lima Nights** reflect themes from Marie Arana?s previous books, including the issues of class described in her memoir, **American Chica**, and the relationships captured in the novel **Cellophane**?

Author Bio

Marie Arana was born in Lima, Peru. She is the author of the memoir AMERICAN CHICA, a finalist for the National Book Award; two novels, CELLOPHANE and LIMA NIGHTS; and THE WRITING LIFE, a collection from her well-known column for *The Washington Post*. She lives in Washington, DC, and Lima, Peru.

Critical Praise

"Unflinching ? compelling?. Intelligent."

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