



We Carry Our Homes With Us: A Cuban American Memoir

By Marisella Veiga

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On December 30, 1960, Marisella Veiga with her mother and two brothers boarded a plane from Havana to Miami. Her father fled a few months later, joining his family with a total of fourteen U.S. cents in his pocket and an understanding that he would never see his homeland again. Seeking a less competitive job market and thanks largely to the sponsorship of a host family in St. Paul, the Veigas resettled in Minnesota, miles away from the Caribbean subtropics, where the climate was similar to home, Spanish was spoken, and thousands of exiles arrived each month.

Veiga's stories are rich with detail and character as she describes her integration into a northern midwestern landscape she grew to love, from adapting to the cold--learning to ice-skate before learning to speak English--to her obsession with Davy Jones. Yet, the weight of her biculturalism--being of two worlds but an outsider to both--has been central to her quest for identity: "Sometimes, I dream that if I can get in touch with the essence of that monolingual child with one set of customs, I would be satisfied. I would be complete, whole." In this honest memoir, readers will find a resonant story of an exile's journey, one that ultimately embraces those two worlds: a life of conflict and limbo but also one of richness and understanding.

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