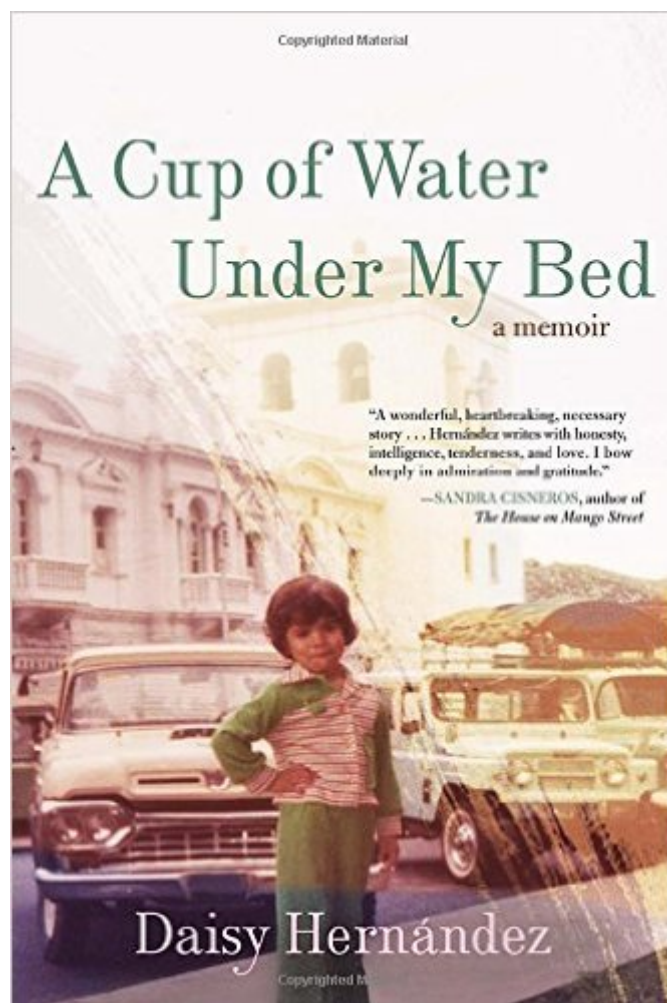


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A Cup Of Water Under My Bed: A Memoir



Synopsis

A coming-of-age memoir by a Colombian-Cuban woman about shaping lessons from home into a new, queer life. In this lyrical, coming-of-age memoir, Daisy Hernández chronicles what the women in her Cuban-Colombian family taught her about love, money, and race. Her mother warns her about envidia and men who seduce you with pastries, while one tía laments that her niece is turning out to be a *ceuna india* instead of an American. Another auntie instructs that when two people are close, they are bound to become like *uñas y mugre*, fingernails and dirt, and that no, Daisy's father is not godless. He's simply praying to a candy dish that can be traced back to Africa. These lessons rooted in women's experiences of migration, colonization, and war define in evocative detail what it means to grow up female in an immigrant home. In one story, Daisy sets out to defy the dictates of race and class that preoccupy her mother and tías, but dating women and transmen, and coming to identify as bisexual, leads her to unexpected questions. In another piece, NAFTA shuts local factories in her hometown on the outskirts of New York City, and she begins translating unemployment forms for her parents, moving between English and Spanish, as well as private and collective fears. In prose that is both memoir and commentary, Daisy reflects on reporting for the New York Times as the paper is rocked by the biggest plagiarism scandal in its history and plunged into debates about the role of race in the newsroom. A heartfelt exploration of family, identity, and language, *A Cup of Water Under My Bed* is ultimately a daughter's story of finding herself and her community, and of creating a new, queer life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Daisy Hernandez's memoir "A Cup of Water Under My Bed" takes its title from the object used by her community (her parents are from Columbia and Cuba) to tell fortunes. Her culture and community was full of women who told stories, both their own and others, and Daisy would eventually major in creative writing and become a journalist for publications as diverse as "The New York Times" and "Ms." Her memoir is a candid and poignant (and non-linear) exploration of topics like feminism, queer culture, religion and racism. The first section of the memoir is mostly about Hernandez's early life. Hernandez grew up in the eighties and attended Catholic schools as a youth. Her father was a factory worker, whose hours were often shifted around, and her mother worked as a seamstress in a factory, as well. As a child, Daisy was often called upon to translate for them to the bigger (and whiter) world. Both her parents believed in the value of education and encouraged Daisy in that direction, although there was also tension from the family's poverty and her father's physical abuse. Like many kids of that era, Daisy took some of her cues from sitcom characters, including Bill Cosby, and that shaped her future expectations of a desirable adulthood. While aspects of the "white" world attracted her, she also experienced conflicting emotions. As a young adult, she realized she was bisexual, and dealt with her family's reactions, which is written about in the second section. The last is about Hernandez's development as a writer and her internship at "The New York Times," post 9-11. Readers, like me, who believe the Times is a stronghold of political correctness, may be surprised at some of the encounters Hernandez relates in her book. Hernandez should be congratulated for her candor and willingness to take on these topics. There was a lot of food for thought in these pages. It made me see things through a different lens (I grew up white and middle class). I expected a more linear narrative, but still enjoyed this memoir.

A Cup of Water Under My Bed by Daisy Hernandez is a memoir by an author of Cuban/Colombian heritage. Her stories center around family, namely her father, mother and many tias who shared her New Jersey neighborhood. Daisy grew to become a talented contributor to many feminist magazines and this is the story of how she reached that goal. Daisy's mother was from Colombia and worked in a garment factory. Like many women of this culture she abdicated all of her identity to her Cuban, alcoholic husband. Dad followed the Santería - a religion and as such kept the talismans of the cult hidden all over the house. Daisy was eventually introduced to the rituals but her first encounter was after a horrific beating at the hands of her father when she was only 4 years old. After the thrashing her father's Santera, his spiritual leader, shows up and tells Daisy that she must be a good girl and learn to be quiet around her father thus deflecting the blame onto the

victim. Daisy's writings as a journalist often reflect the theme of the differences between her mother's stories and her own. She laments that "You betray your parents if you don't become like them and you betray them if you do". The story, unfortunately, is disjointed with leaps from childhood to adulthood and then in-between. Some authors do this well but with Ms. Hernandez it was awkward and uncoordinated. I also found the insertions of Spanish words and phrases unnecessary and distracting - a little bit of that goes a long way. This memoir is actually very endearing when Daisy is reminiscing about her family and culture but gets clumsy when she's talking about herself. Her sexual preferences that caused many problems with her family seem to be due mostly to the times and the culture. I loved the input reminiscent of the circles of women that congregate in many Hispanic households. For example the facts of life can be reduced to: "Romance happens between seven and nine in the evening on Spanish soap operas. Sex comes after". This should have been a much better book. Ms. Hernandez is a talented author with lots to say about her culture and the power of feminism. I think she missed the mark with this one.

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