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Allende, Isabel. Maya's Notebook

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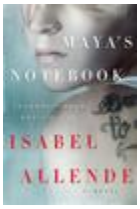

To be only nineteen and exiled on a remote Chilean island, on the run from drug dealers and the police, is a life that Maya Vidal could not have imagined for herself. Growing up in Berkeley, California under the care of her eccentric Chilean grandmother, Nini, and loving astronomer Grandfather, Popo, Maya was happy despite being abandoned by her Danish flight-attendant mother. However, when her beloved Popo dies of Cancer and her Nini slips into an all-consuming depression, she begins a dangerous downward spiral, experimenting with drugs and committing crimes just to numb the pain she is feeling. When her Nini finally emerges from her fog and notices the trouble that Maya has gotten into, she sends her to a rehabilitation center for teens in Oregon. After only a short time, Maya escapes, hitching a ride with a trucker, who first sexually abuses her and then dumps her in Las Vegas with ten dollars. Emotionally and physically bruised, Maya takes up with the first man who shows an interest in her, Brandon Leeman, a drug-dealing junkie who offers her a job and a chance to be in his inner circle.

Even though she has all the drugs and money she could want at her disposal for the first time, in the back of her mind, Maya still longs to get clean and go back to her Nini in California. After there is violent betrayal among Brandon Leeman’s ranks, Maya loses the only protection she has, ending up on the streets of Las Vegas, on the run from the FBI and rival drug dealers.

Eventually her Nini comes to the rescue and Maya agrees to her radical plan of seeking refuge with her old friend, Manuel Arias, an academic recluse in his seventies who was once a political prisoner. She spends a year in Chiloe, disconnected from the outside world, immersing herself in the rich history of the island, its mythology and the villagers who she begins to care about like family. Even though a far cry from the man that her Popo was, Manuel, with secrets of his own, fills a part of the space within Maya that the death of her grandfather left behind. But she can’t hide there forever. Maya must still come to terms with her past after the men who are hunting her finally arrive at the doors of her remote sanctuary. Juxtaposing two pasts, Maya and the island of Chiloe, Isabel Allende has written a book in her trademark lyrical style but with a fast paced intensity not usually found in her other novels.

allende and mayas notebook
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Tags: Fiction, Literary Fiction, Thriller

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