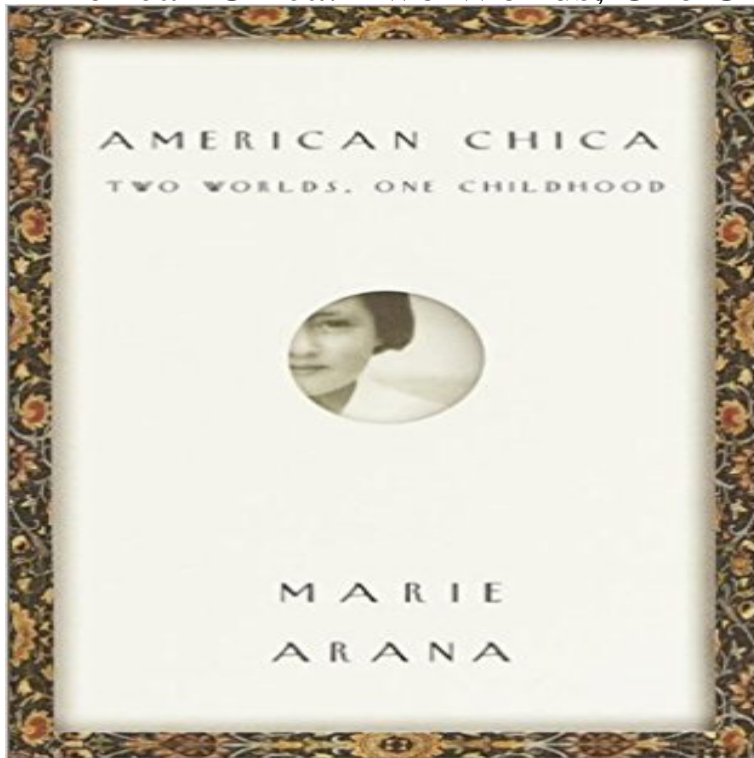


American Chica: Two Worlds, One Childhood



From her fathers genteel Peruvian family, Marie Arana was taught to be a proper lady, yet from her mothers American family she learned to shoot a gun, break a horse, and snap a chickens neck for dinner. Arana shuttled easily between these deeply separate cultures for years. But only when she immigrated with her family to the United States did she come to understand that she was a hybrid American, an individual whose cultural identity was split in half. Coming to terms with this split is at the heart of this graceful, beautifully realized portrait of a child who was a north-south collision, a New World fusion. An American chica. Through Aranas eyes the reader will discover not only the diverse, earthquake-prone terrain of Peru, charged with ghosts of history and mythology, but also the vast prairie lands of Wyoming, grave-slab flat, and hemmed by mountains. In these landscapes resides a fierce and colorful cast of family members who bring her historia vividly to life, among them Aranas proud paternal grandfather, Victor Manuel Arana Sobrevilla, who one day simply stopped coming down the stairs; her dazzling maternal grandmother, Rosa Cisneros y Cisneros, clicking through the house as if she were making her way onstage; Grandpa Doc, her maternal grandfather, who, by example, taught her about the constancy of love. But most important are Aranas parents, Jorge and Marie. He a brilliant engineer, she a talented musician. For more than half a century these two passionate, strong-willed people struggled to overcome the bicultural tensions in their marriage and, finally, to prevail.

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