

Fruit of the Drunken Tree

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Summary:

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In the vein of Isabel Allende and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a mesmerizing debut set against the backdrop of the devastating violence of 1990's Colombia about a sheltered young girl and a teenage maid who strike an unlikely friendship that threatens to undo them both

The Santiago family lives in a gated community in Bogotá, safe from the political upheaval terrorizing the country. Seven-year-old Chula and her older sister Cassandra enjoy carefree lives thanks to this protective bubble, but the threat of kidnappings, car bombs, and assassinations hover just outside the neighborhood walls, where the godlike drug lord Pablo Escobar continues to elude authorities and capture the attention of the nation.

When their mother hires Petrona, a live-in-maid from the city's guerrilla-occupied slum, Chula makes it her mission to understand Petrona's mysterious ways. But Petrona's unusual behavior belies more than shyness. She is a young woman crumbling under the burden of providing for her family as the rip tide of first love pulls her in the opposite direction. As both girls' families scramble to maintain stability amidst the rapidly escalating conflict, Petrona and Chula find themselves entangled in a web of secrecy that will force them both to choose between sacrifice and betrayal.

Inspired by the author's own life, and told through the alternating perspectives of the willful Chula and the achingly hopeful Petrona, Fruit of the Drunken Tree contrasts two very different, but inextricable coming-of-age stories. In lush prose, Rojas Contreras sheds light on the impossible choices women are often forced to make in the face of violence and the unexpected connections that can blossom out of desperation.

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