

Journey of Resilience

BETH JORDAN

Exploring Cultural Identity, Grief, and Self-Discovery in 'Thank You for the Kiss'

Beth Jordan shares her diverse life experiences and their influence on her debut novel, "Thank You for the Kiss," set in Cuba, delving into themes of resilience and personal transformation.

In the tapestry of life, some threads weave stories of remarkable diversity, resilience, and profound self-discovery. Beth Jordan's journey is a testament to this rich narrative tapestry, as she generously shares her odyssey of cultural exploration, personal growth, and creative expression in her debut novel, "Thank You for the Kiss".

Beth's narrative begins in the vibrant hues of India, where storytelling and heritage were ingrained in her upbringing. From these roots, her path meandered across continents, from the corridors of a Convent school in the UK to the bustling streets of entrepreneurial ventures. Each chapter of her life, whether as a nurse, a teacher, or an anthropologist, served as a canvas for empathy, observation, and the intricate weaving of human stories.

"Thank You for the Kiss" unfolds against the backdrop of Cuba, a land both enchanting and perilous, where Beth found solace and inspiration amidst personal loss and profound cultural encounters. Through the eyes of her protagonist, Gina, readers embark on a journey of resilience, navigating the complexities of grief, identity, and the allure of a foreign land.

Drawing from her deep well of anthropological insight and global curiosity, Beth breathes life

into Cuba's landscape and its people, capturing both the vibrant spirit and the haunting shadows that linger beneath the surface. Through Gina's transformative journey, Beth invites readers to contemplate the resilience of the human spirit, the power of inner strength, and the gentle reminder to tread with compassion in times of adversity.

As Beth's narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that "Thank You for the Kiss" is more than a memoir—it is a testament to the universal human experience, where loss and hope intertwine, and where the echoes of one's journey resonate across cultures and continents. It is a story that beckons readers to listen, to empathize, and to discover the beauty that emerges from life's most profound moments of challenge and triumph.

Your background is incredibly diverse, spanning from nursing and teaching to entrepreneurship and writing. How have these varied experiences influenced your approach to storytelling, particularly in your debut novel, "Thank You for the Kiss"?

Each of my careers was people centric,



"Dive into the pages of 'Thank You for the Kiss' as Beth Jordan's debut novel unfolds against the backdrop of Cuba's vibrant landscape."

forming strong bonds through empathy and observation of cultural similarities and differences in order to work in new environments and better understand their needs and what I needed for my own work. I listened to their stories and in my head wove them into my own life, which became its own unique story.

Beth Jordan, author of 'Thank You for the Kiss,' reflects on her journey of cultural exploration and personal growth.

Thank You for the Kiss explores themes of cultural identity, grief, and self-discovery against the backdrop of Cuba. What drew you to set your novel in Cuba, and how did you incorporate your own experiences and observations into the narrative?

In 2014/15, I visited Cuba on holiday, a new part of the world to explore and a new culture. After a painful separation of 23 years and my mother's death in 2011, I needed to find a new life reference to overcome my deep loss of two of the most important people in my life. I fell in love with Cuba the island, its similarity to my childhood life in India, its own grief and resilience and its 'forever' hope. The people I met, the dark experiences that emerged creating a dantesque inferno, became the backdrop to my first novel.

Gina, the protagonist of your novel, undergoes a journey of personal transformation throughout the story. Can you discuss the inspiration behind her character and the challenges she faces as she navigates through grief and deception in a foreign land?

This memoir is based on the author's own life events in Cuba, her adventuress soul and constant

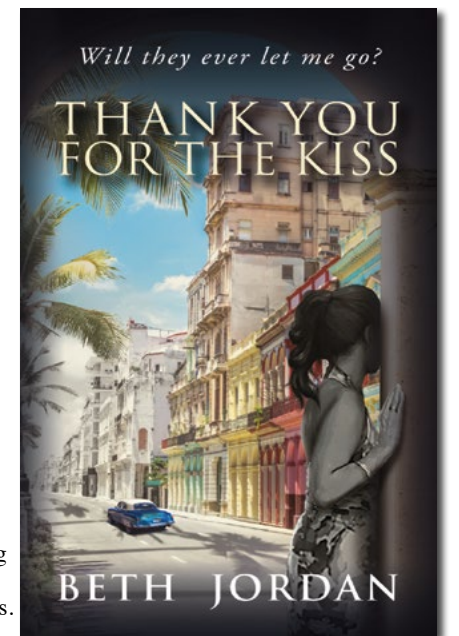
curiosity becoming her nemesis. Her underlying grief altered her usual decision making process. Cuba's political impact on its people touched her heart but misled her into believing she could be a force for good. She succumbs to the locals' need to escape and flee their trapped lives, entrapping herself. But her old warrior self surfaces as she determines to recover her loss of self worth and financial investments. Her own cultural beliefs strengthen her resolve.

Your bio mentions a deep interest in anthropology and a passion for exploring global cultures. How did your studies in anthropology inform your writing process, particularly in capturing the cultural nuances and complexities depicted in your novel?

Studying anthropology allowed me to see beyond the palm trees and white beaches, beyond tourism and the glamour of exotic poster places. Understanding in general cultural nuances I was able to quickly empathise with the people, their lives, listen to their stories, music and traditions (the pig feast) which vividly allowed me to describe in detail and colour all that I saw.

"Thank You for the Kiss" delves into the concept of resilience and the struggle to rebuild one's life after profound loss. What message or insight do you hope readers take away from Gina's journey, especially in terms of overcoming adversity and finding inner strength?

Never make decisions of importance when in a state of grief,



but if you do remember to be gentle with your self, remember what your original intention was, remember the culture into which you stepped into. What had you wanted to contribute to it, did all gain from it?

The setting of Cuba is portrayed as both enchanting and perilous in your novel. Can you discuss your approach to depicting Cuba's landscape and its people, balancing the allure of the country with the darker aspects of Gina's experience?

I wanted to paint Cuba as a background of hope and inspiration, through its peoples' vibrant sense of pride, trapped in a time warp and desperate for change, with always a sense of darkness still shackling them to an old man's dream. Gina's unexpected experiences wove themselves on top of this tapestry, mirroring and matching what she experienced. Their outcomes inextricably bound.