

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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PROPOSAL FOR CREATIVE THESIS

THE CLAIRVOYANT OF CALLE OCHO

by

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*The Clairvoyant of Calle Ocho* is a contemporary women's novel that focuses on the turns women's lives can take when they losing touch with, and trust in, their own "knowing." It tells the story of Mariela Valdes, who discovered she was clairvoyant in her teens, but renounced her gift and shut off her intuition when she failed to foresee her mother's fatal illness. After failed marriages, she finds herself, at 39, landlady of the last property she inherited from her mother, and involved in a secret affair with Hector Ferro, a tenant who is a married man, a choice she thought, wrongly, would protect her from the pain of attachment. When her lover is found dead mere yards from her front door, her pain over his death, along with fear of being accused of his murder, leads her to embark on a quest to relearn clairvoyance so she can communicate with her dead lover, solve the mystery of his death, regain her gift for knowing, and free herself of the fear that has kept her from "seeing" her way to happiness.

The novel's main action is set within the imaginary, hyper-bohemian neighborhood of Coffee Park, part of the historic multicultural community of Little Havana. The residents of Mariela's building and a neighboring one include a young woman caught in drug abuse, the cold elusive wife of the dead man, an aspiring painter who is smitten with a neighbor who is the single mother of a fragile, nearly blind son, and the landlady of the building next door, a self-taught designer of eclectic fashion who is the neighborhood's resident voice of wisdom. Hector, an autocratic sensualist who owned a Spanish language bookstore, continues to haunt Coffee Park after his death, his apparition as troubling to Mariela in death as he was in life.

Though the novel, told in the first person, contains a murder and several mysteries, it is not primarily a murder mystery. As in Muriel Spark's novels *A Far Cry from Kensington* and *Loitering with Intent*, crime is a catalyst that leads to the unraveling of the motivations, secrets, and true characters of a small community. As Mariela conquers her fear of seeing and, thus, of truly living, she discovers the importance of sisterhood among women and comes to a new definition of marriage, infidelity, and forgiveness.