Nacida en España, y proveniente de una familia pobre, Inés Suárez sobrevive a diario trabajando como costurera. Es el siglo dieciséis, y la conquista de América está apenas comenzando. Cuando un día el esposo de Inés desaparece rumbo al Nuevo Mundo, ella aprovecha para partir en busca de él y escapar de la vida claustrofóbica que lleva en su tierra natal. Tras el accidentado viaje que la lleva hasta Perú, Inés se entera de que su esposo ha muerto en una batalla. Sin embargo, muy pronto da inicio a una apasionada relación amorosa con el hombre que cambiará su vida por completo: Pedro de Valdivia, el valiente héroe de guerra y mariscal de Francisco Pizarro.

Valdivia sueña con triunfar donde otros españoles han fracasado, llevando a cabo la conquista de Chile. Aunque se dice que en aquellas tierras no hay oro y que los guerreros son feroces, esto inspira a Valdivia aun más ya que lo que busca es el honor y la gloria. Juntos, los dos amantes fundarán la ciudad de Santiago y librarán una guerra sangrienta contra los indígenas chilenos en una lucha que cambiará sus vidas para siempre.

Basada en una investigación meticulosa, y contada con la pasión y el extraordinario talento narrativo de Isabel Allende, Inés del Alma Mia es una obra de impresionante magnitud.
My Personal Review:
Since I began studying Spanish, Isabel Allende has become one of my favorite authors. In this dazzling novel she does it again. Ines Suarez, the protagonist, an old lady, is trying to set down the tumultuous story of her life, a life which is intimately entwined with the history of her country. Born in a rural town in a backward part of Spain, she journeys to the New World in search of her missing husband, traces his steps to Peru, learns of his death, and manages to survive as one of the few Spanish women in the new land.

Later she enters into a tumultuous relationship with the ambitious and brilliant Pedro de Valdivia, and follows him in his singleminded pursuit--the conquest of Chile. Its a story of endurance, daring, survival, unimaginable cruelty and horror, miraculous survival, a clash of peoples which can have no happy ending, the building of cities, passionate love, and unbearable, tragic losses. Ill say no more. You just have to read the book.

Author Allende writes in her inimitable style--lucid and flowing--that draws the reader in with an unusual sense of intimacy. I found it easy to follow in spite of many words that aren't in my Spanish dictionary. The character of Ines is compelling--a powerful, gifted woman who refused to abide by the stereotyped roles of her time. Amazingly, Allende is able to convey the sweep of history, a story that extends over more than fifty years, without losing that sense of personal connection. I dont know how she does it. Sometimes the feminist message of this book is almost overdone--almost, but not quite. A genius like Allende gets some latitude. I recommend this book highly. Reviewed by Louis N. Gruber.

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