Dear Reader,

I am so excited to share my story, *Outnumbered*, with you! It is the amalgamation of dozens of tales I have heard since childhood, eavesdropping on every adult conversation my parents had with their friends. I was always intrigued and pulled in to the stories of my people, the Jews, forced into yet another epic exile in Cuba (and later in the United States).

My parents always stayed connected to their “Jewban” family, as they all seem to find comfort and solace in the kinship of community and spirit they grew accustomed to for generations and ultimately passed down to my own generation. It is estimated that about 24,000 Jews lived in Cuba in the 1920s and 1930s but approximately 95 percent of those Jews left the island for the United States and other countries after Castro’s arrival in 1959. The Jewban community still thrives outside of Cuba, but our numbers are slowly dwindling as we assimilate in our new cultures. Many of us have never even seen our parents’ adoptive Cuba, but we carry our community’s traditions and customs deep within our hearts.

I finally decided to sit down to create a few fictional characters and write about some of the candid stories I’ve collected, cherished, and prized over the years - some from my own family and others from friends that belong to this unique group of immigrants. From the clubs and beaches of Havana to the sights and sounds of New York City and Miami, journey with Max and his family through the historical Jewban landscape.

**Max Chastine is a man on a mission – there is strength in numbers, and when his finally come in, Max is determined to show them all what he’s made of.**

Max is a brave and lucky man who plays well by the numbers. He outwits fate time and time again, trusting merely in his strong instincts, those heavenly whispers, and his lucky gambles. But Max remains haunted by a very cryptic and long-time hidden family secret.

Caught up in the dichotomy of generations of gossip-mongers who know how to bury the past to take care of their own, Max Chastine is kept preoccupied with silent secrets about his own family. From Havana, Cuba to New York, and ultimately to Miami, Max lives in a haze of faraway whispers and numbered signs, until he finally discovers the hidden truths of his past.

In the decades that follow his troubled upbringing in Cuba, Max nearly loses his life (more than once!), almost loses his loving wife, and continues to struggle with the stresses of financial security and self-respect. But when Max finally hits the jackpot in the state lottery, he truly believes he has finally achieved ultimate victory. His gossipy community are claiming that Max Chastine must surely be the luckiest man in the world. But for how long can he continue to measure his success in numbers? There is still something mysteriously missing. . . Max must find a way to put all of his good fortune and irascible idiosyncrasies to good order and discover true fortune- the empirical value of his numbered days.

Every number is invaluable.

Sincerely,

Mandi Eizenbaum

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