



Falling Room (American Lives)

Eli Hastings

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Coming of age poor in spirit in the America of plenty is an old story that is yet endlessly new, beginning afresh every time a confused teenager tries to make sense of his privileged place in the world. Eli Hastings got a head start on this when his idealistic, permissive parents divorced, and he sought answers by sneaking out at night to play chicken with freight trains, write graffiti, and get high with friends. This youthful rebellion included an arrest and weekend in jail for drug possession and later jail for an act of civil disobedience during the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle. Hastings recounts how a privileged, white, fiercely leftist American male tries to make sense of himself in relation to the contrary people and situations he finds in books and his travels to Cuba and Central America.

Falling Room is the tale of how one man matures through the sometimes violent blessing of social change and finds himself--and a sense of purpose--through the loss of innocence and naiveté. Reflecting on the firsthand experience of hip-hop and substance abuse, of the fracturing of family, the loss of his father, and of the imperialism of the United States, Hastings's story offers a new and moving look at how families, nations, and individuals survive and heal.

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