



Before Night Falls: A Memoir

By Reinaldo Arenas

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The shocking memoir by visionary Cuban writer **Reinaldo Arenas** "is a book above all about being free," said **The New York Review of Books**--sexually, politically, artistically. Arenas recounts a stunning odyssey from his poverty-stricken childhood in rural Cuba and his adolescence as a rebel fighting for Castro, through his suppression as a writer, imprisonment as a homosexual, his flight from Cuba via the Mariel boat lift, and his subsequent life and the events leading to his death in New York. In what **The Miami Herald** calls his "deathbed ode to eroticism," Arenas breaks through the code of secrecy and silence that protects the privileged in a state where homosexuality is a political crime. Recorded in simple, straightforward prose, this is the true story of the Kafkaesque life and world re-created in the author's acclaimed novels.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this powerful memoir of passions both personal and political, Cuban author Arenas (*Hallucinations*) describes his voyage from peasant poverty to his oppression as a dissident writer and homosexual. His voracious sexuality pervades the book (numerous encounters are described), and Arenas suggests that the gay world is instinctually non-monogamous, though he was celibate in the "monstrosity" of prison. The young Arenas, in the early days of Fidel Castro's revolution, gained his literary education working at the National Library; he then joined a fervent literary circle. The Castro regime, however, banned his first novel, *The Ill-Fated Peregrinations of Fray Servando* , and Arenas had to evade security police to smuggle manuscripts abroad for publication. Protesting Castro's support of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Arenas suffered forced labor in the sugarcane fields, spent more than two years in prison after being prosecuted as a homosexual counterrevolutionary and managed to gain exile along with many other gays during the 1980 Mariel boatlift. Having appended a fierce denunciation to this book of those seeking dialogue with Castro, the 47-year-old Arenas, who was suffering from AIDS, committed suicide in New York City in 1990.

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From Library Journal

This celebrated Cuban writer (*The Doorman* , LJ 5/15/91; *Singing from the Well* , LJ 7/87), a victim of AIDS, committed suicide in New York in 1990. His autobiographical memoir is a fascinating and frightening tale of growing up extremely poor in rural Cuba, of varied personal and political relationships, of rebelliousness, homosexuality, suppression, and persecution. In the picaresque tradition, the narrative is earthy and at times raw; the frequent sexual escapades are presumably true accounts. The description of life in Havana's El Morro prison makes the skin crawl. As an author who was not only antiregime but also gay, Arenas was compelled to smuggle his work abroad for publication. More than a personal story, this memoir is an insightful analysis of the idiosyncrasies of an authoritarian regime. Recommended for literature collections.

- *Charles E. Perry, East Central Univ., Ada, Okla.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

From Cuban novelist Arenas (*The Doorman*, 1991, etc.), who, ill with AIDS, committed suicide in 1990 shortly after completing this book: an extraordinarily powerful autobiography that's both a poignant personal memoir and a damning political indictment of the Castro regime and its supporters. The only child of a mother whose lover deserted her, Arenas was raised in his peasant grandparents' home. Living in the countryside (whose superstitions and rituals the author vividly evokes here), the large family barely grew enough to feed themselves. As a teenager, Arenas worked in a factory, but, bored, he joined Castro's rebels, whose battles against Batista turned out to be more propaganda than reality--the real killing began, Arenas says, once Castro was in power. Selected for further education, he was sent for accountant's training in a remote camp where Marxist- Leninist texts and dogma were taught by Communists. By now, Arenas, disenchanted with Castro's totalitarian regime, had begun to write. His work soon attracted attention and he moved to Havana, where he wrote two novels that, though unpublished, won prestigious awards. Shortly afterward, the harassment began that would lead to the smuggling abroad of his writings, which were published overseas to critical acclaim; to brutal imprisonment and torture; and, finally, to exile with the Mariel boatlift. A homosexual--Arenas is very frank here about his experiences and feelings--and political dissident, the author had been doubly vulnerable in a state where homosexuals were routinely imprisoned.

Exile proved little better: New York was "soulless," and for Cubans who have suffered persecution for twenty years in that terrible world, there is really no solace anywhere." Unable to write and to struggle for the freedom of Cuba," Arenas said in a letter intended for posthumous publication, "I am ending my life." A last testament that resonates with passion for the freedom of the human spirit and for the author's beloved Cuba: a distinguished addition to the literature of dissent and exile. -- *Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leslie Marcellus:

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Edward Upton:

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Billy Migliore:

Spent a free the perfect time to be fun activity to try and do! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or their own friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something different to fill your current free time/ holiday? Can be reading a book may be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing that you'll ask may be what kinds of reserve that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the guide untitled Before Night Falls: A Memoir can be fine book to read. May be it may be best activity to you.

Denise Wallis:

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