



Before Night Falls: A Memoir

Reinaldo Arenas

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Reinaldo Arenas' account of his life as a writer and a homosexual. Acknowledged as one of the great 20th-century Cuban writers, he was born in 1943 into a poor, rural Cuban family. At the age of 15 he joined Castro's guerrillas against Batista's right-wing regime, only to discover that repression under Castro would be on a monumental scale. He spent 20 years of his life trying to survive his "re-education", to safeguard his manuscripts and to maintain his sanity when he was imprisoned in El Morro prison in Havana. But, despite everything that had happened to him, including betrayal by his aunt and some of his closest "friends", Arenas triumphed, finally leaving Cuba during the Mariel exodus in 1980. But America could never replace his beloved Cuba, and his anti-Castro stance made him unsympathetic to many American intellectuals. "Before Night Falls" was begun before Arenas left Cuba and was completed in the last stage of his battle with AIDS, which dominated the last years of his life until he committed suicide on 7 December 1990 at the age of 47. It is a compelling and moving account of the hell Arenas experienced in Cuba and the purgatory he endured in the United States. It is a book both raw and fierce, tender and lyrical. It reveals a man of enormous vitality, resilience and courage.

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