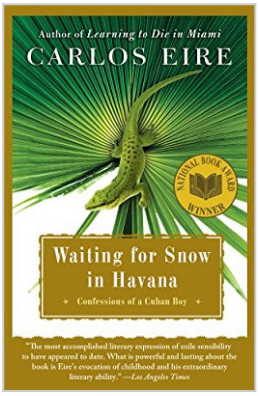

Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy

By Carlos Eire

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“Have mercy on me, Lord, I am Cuban.” In 1962, Carlos Eire was one of 14,000 children airlifted out of Havana—exiled from his family, his country, and his own childhood by Fidel Castro’s revolution. Winner of the National Book Award, this stunning memoir is a vibrant and evocative look at Latin America from a child’s unforgettable experience.

Waiting for Snow in Havana is both an exorcism and an ode to a paradise lost. For the Cuba of Carlos’s youth—with its lizards and turquoise seas and sun-drenched siestas—becomes an island of condemnation once a cigar-smoking guerrilla named Fidel Castro ousts President Batista on January 1, 1959. Suddenly the music in the streets sounds like gunfire. Christmas is made illegal, political dissent leads to imprisonment, and too many of Carlos’s friends are leaving Cuba for a place as far away and unthinkable as the United States. Carlos will end up there, too, and fulfill his mother’s dreams by becoming a modern American man—even if his soul remains in the country he left behind.

Narrated with the urgency of a confession, *Waiting for Snow in Havana* is a eulogy for a native land and a loving testament to the collective spirit of Cubans everywhere.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
"Metaphors matter to me, especially perfect ones," Yale historian Eire writes in this beautifully fashioned memoir, as he recounts one of many wonderfully vibrant stories from his boyhood in 1950s Havana. As imaginatively wrought as the finest piece of fiction, the book abounds with magical interpretations of ordinary boyhood events-playing in a friend's backyard is like a perilous journey through the jungle; setting off firecrackers becomes a lyrical, cosmic opera; a child's birthday party turns into a phantasmagoria of American pop cultural icons. Taking his cue from his father, a man with "a very fertile, nearly inexhaustible imagination, totally dedicated to inventing past lives," Eire looks beyond the literal to see the mythological themes inherent in the epic struggle for identity that each of our lives represents. Into this fantastic idyll comes Castro-"Beelzebub, Herod, and the Seven-Headed Beast of the Apocalypse rolled into one"-overthrowing the Batista regime at the very end of 1958 and sweeping away everything that the author holds dear. A world that had been bursting with complicated, colorful meaning is replaced with the monotony of Castro's rhetoric and terrorizing "reform." Symbols of Jesus that had once provided spiritual enlightenment by popping up in the author's premonitions and dreams were now literally being demolished and destroyed by a government that has outlawed religion. The final cataclysm comes when Eire and his brother, still young boys, are shipped off to the United States to seek safety and a better life (another paradise, perhaps). They never see their father again.As painful as Eire's journey has been, his ability to see tragedy and suffering as a constant source of redemption is what makes this book so powerful. Where his father believed that we live many lives in different bodies, Eire sees his own life as a series of deaths within the same body. "Dying can be beautiful," he writes, "And waking up is even more beautiful. Even when the world has changed." Taking his cue from his beloved Jesus, the author believes that we repeatedly die for our sins and are reborn into a new awareness of paradise. How fortunate for readers, then, that by way of Eire's "confessions," they too will be able to renew their souls through his transcendent words.

From The New Yorker
At the start of the nineteen-sixties, an operation called Pedro Pan flew more than fourteen thousand Cuban children out of the country, without their parents, and deposited them in Miami. Eire, now a professor of history and religion at Yale, was one of them. His deeply moving memoir describes his life before Castro, among the aristocracy of old Cuba—his father, a judge, believed himself to be the reincarnation of Louis XVI—and, later, in America, where he turned from a child of privilege into a Lost Boy. Eire's tone is so urgent and so vividly personal (he is even nostalgic about Havana's beautiful blue clouds of DDT) that his unsparing indictments of practically everyone concerned, including himself, seem all the more remarkable.

From Booklist
Eire's complex, introspective memoir begins the day his world changed: when Castro's troops sent President Batista into exile far from Cuba in 1959. The son of a judge who believed himself to be Louis XVI reincarnated, Carlos, along with his older brother, Tony, spent his days playing with fireworks and lizards. He attended an elite school, where Batista's children were his classmates. Carlos' biggest worries were the disapproving stares he received from a portrait of Maria Theresa of Austria and Jesus, who would sometimes appear in the window to him. All of that changed when Castro came to power; suddenly, attending a prestigious school or driving a classy car was dangerous. The Eire family remained in Cuba even as others left, until finally Eire's parents sent Carlos and Tony to Florida, where a very different life awaited them.

Years passed before their mother joined them, but Carlos never saw his father again. In this open, honest, and at times angry memoir, Eire bares his soul completely and captivates the reader in the process. *Kristine Huntley*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Teresa Sullivan:

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Reading can called imagination hangout, why? Because when you are reading a book specifically book entitled Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy your mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every single aspect that maybe unknown for but surely might be your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a reserve then become one form conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get prior to. The Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy giving you one more experience more than blown away your brain but also giving you useful data for your better life in this particular era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning a casino game. Do you want to try this extraordinary spending spare time activity?

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