



Girl on the Edge: A Memoir

Ruth Carneson

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Ruth was four years old when her father was arrested for high treason and her world was turned upside-down. She grew up in constant fear of Special Branch policemen knocking on the door to arrest her mother or father, prominent South African communist. Ruth learned how to keep her mouth shut, to look out for microphones in the walls and to beware of friends who could betray her trust. At fourteen, Ruth left South Africa, clutching her teddy bear in one hand and her drawings in the other. A plan to England carried her into exile, a new world where she struggled to reconstruct a life fractured by fear. With an artist's eye for detail and colour, Ruth recalls her life with unflinching honesty: the Treason Trial; her struggle to conform; Friern Barnet Asylum for the 'hopeless insane'; LSD, protests, and free love in London, art school and motherhood; communes and camping- all steps in a journey that finally brought her home to South Africa on the brink of change. Heart- wrenchingly sad one minute, bursting with life and vigour the next, seamed throughout by strength and courage, girl on the edge allows us to look deep into one woman's life and travel with her to the brink and back again.

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