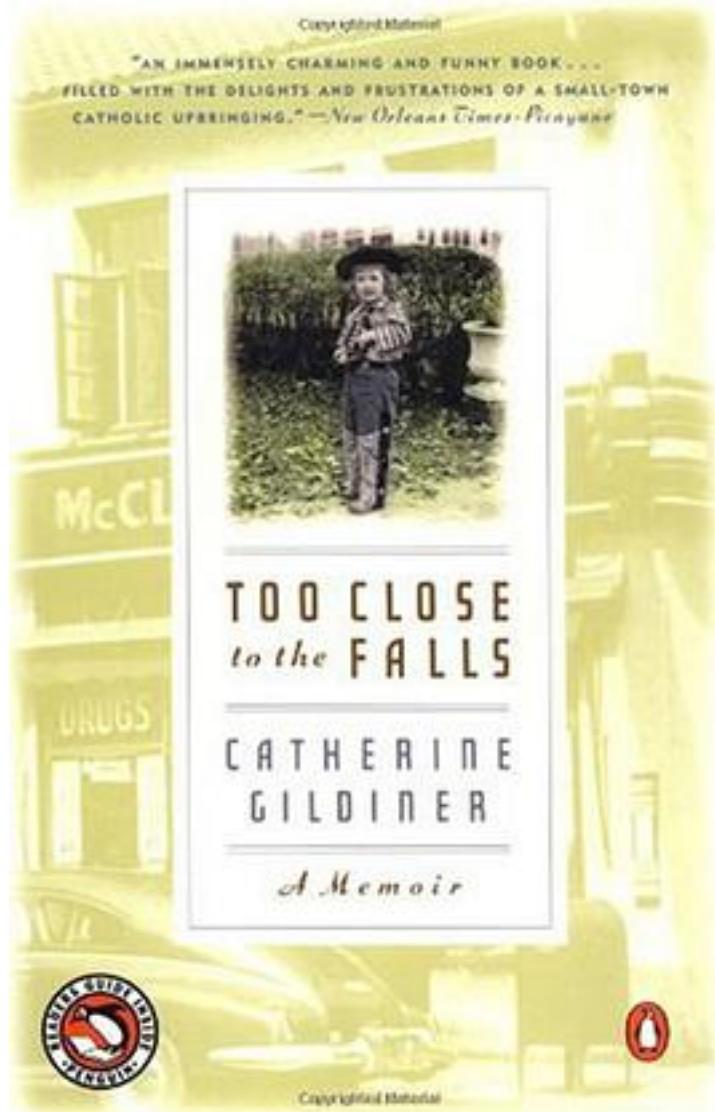


# Too Close to the Falls



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A prize-winning, best selling, rivetingly dark and funny memoir of a most unusual girl. It is the mid-1950s in Lewiston, a sleepy town near Niagara Falls, famous only for the invention of the cocktail. Divorce is unheard of, mothers wear high heels to the beauty salon, and television has only just arrived. But with no siblings to provide role models; a workaholic father chosen by most of her class as Lewiston's present-day saint; a mother who looks the part of the perfect 1950s housewife but refuses to play it ('We ate all of our dinners in restaurants! Our fridge contained only allergy serum, coke and maraschino cherries. Our oven was only turned on to dry wet mittens on the door and the only cooking smell I remember from my youth is that of burning wool'); and a gambling-obsessed best friend, Roy, who is thirty years older, perhaps it's hardly surprising that Cathy grows up a little eccentric. Especially considering that the family doctor's prescription for her hyperactivity is a full-time job in her father's pharmacy -- at four. Cathy is rarely out of trouble whether it's asking why seeing Elvis below the waist is a sin, stabbing the school bully with a compass, breaking through police cordons to interview the Tuscadora Indians or swapping holy water for vodka to test the local priest's alcoholism. She even delivers Nembutal to a sleazy Marilyn Monroe who promptly makes an assignation with Roy. Her highly unusual adventures make compulsive, often moving, reading, but are always hilariously counterbalanced by all the conventional concerns of 1950s small-town life -- TV and rock 'n' roll, matching mother and daughter outfits, teenage rebellion, communism and catholicism. Like all really good memoirs, 'Too Close to the Falls' sneaks up on you; at first you're just reading it quietly to yourself and suddenly you're having to restrain yourself from reading great chunks out to everyone around you.

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