

What a Trip

Susen Edwards

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Two best friends navigate their young adulthoods in Susen Edwards's historical novel *What a Trip*.

Even as the Vietnam War rages on, Fiona and Melissa feel that they have bigger problems: Melissa needs an abortion and a reality check about her unfaithful boyfriend, while Fiona is having second thoughts about her own boyfriend. As one decade ends and another begins, the girls' relationships, goals, and interests change, and so does their friendship. Only time will tell if their bond is strong enough to withstand the pressures of family, romance, politics, and adulthood.

The 1960s—the decade of sex, drugs, and rock and roll—is drawing to a close as the girls come of age. Fiona and Melissa get more than their share of all three, even if they do miss out on going to Woodstock. Fickle, selfish, insecure, and melodramatic, Fiona still manages to set her own desires aside to do what's right (most of the time). She becomes involved in the antiwar movement, while Melissa, who is still more interested in attracting boys than protecting them from the draft, investigates the occult—a hobby that may destroy her friendship with Fiona, even their lives.

Each girl's story unfolds through sparse yet heartbreaking prose. After a lifetime of being told she is no good and acting accordingly, Fiona begins to establish a place for herself with help from a new boyfriend and supportive professors. Still, she struggles with indecision and insecurity, even as she makes the first real, grown-up choices of her life. Caught in the awkward space between adolescence and true adulthood, it is only after an unimaginable tragedy that Fiona finds the courage to decide for herself where life will take her.

Spare and uncompromising, *What a Trip* is a historical novel about a young woman's tumultuous, painful coming-of-age.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (November / December 2022)

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