

## **Falling to Heaven**

Jeanne M. Peterson

[Thomas Dunne Books, 2010; 336 pp., \\$24.99 \(cloth\)](#)

“Novel” is too simplistic a label for the ambitious *I Hotel*. More accurately, it is ten linked novellas—one for each year from 1968 to 1977—and it is braided through with playwriting, philosophizing, graphic art, and a host of colorful, revolutionary characters. The setting is San Francisco’s Chinatown and the focus is on the Asian American movement. Keep your eyes peeled for when, in the ninth novella, one character paraphrases Thich Nhat Hanh’s ideas on love and life. In the novel *Falling to Heaven*, the year is 1954 and an American Quaker couple—Emma and Gerald—take up residence in the Tibetan city of Shigaste. The couple make friends with their neighbors and dive into Tibetan culture—brewing yak butter tea and exploring meditation. But when the Chinese Communists invade, Gerald is taken prisoner and the pregnant Emma must fight governmental stonewalling to get her husband released. Jeanne Peterson, the author of *Falling to Heaven*, is a psychologist who worked for many years with survivors of torture and Communist reeducation.