



A Chant to Soothe Wild Elephants

Jaed Coffin

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Six years ago at the age of twenty-one, Jaed Muncharoen Coffin, a half-Thai American man, left New England's privileged Middlebury College to be ordained as a Buddhist monk in his mother's native village of Panomsarakram--thus fulfilling a familial obligation. While addressing the notions of displacement, ethnic identity, and cultural belonging, *A Chant to Soothe Wild Elephants* chronicles his time at the temple that rain season--receiving alms in the streets in saffron robes; bathing in the canals; learning to meditate in a mountaintop hut; and falling in love with Lek, a beautiful Thai woman who comes to represent the life he can have if he stays. Part armchair travel, part coming-of-age story, this debut work transcends the memoir genre and ushers in a brave new voice in American nonfiction.

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