



We Are Here

Cat Thao Nguyen

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Told through the bright and unflinching eyes of Cat Thao, a daughter born in a refugee camp, *We Are Here* is a memoir that begins in 1975 with her family's gripping exodus by foot out of post-war Vietnam—a dangerous journey, unimaginable to most, on which many perished. Cat Thao's family's escape from persecution traverses the horrific jungles of Khmer Rouge Cambodia and into the crowded Thai refugee camps. From which, finally, the Nguyens were allowed to board a Qantas plane to a freedom they wanted desperately. But the stark contrasting suburban landscapes of Western Sydney, Australia were not the unalloyed blessing they'd imagined. Against the backdrop of an immigrant experience, Cat Thao tells of her coming of age in Australia, haunted by lingering trauma but buoyed by instincts of hope, reinvention, and survival. In a voice both candid and striking, Cat Thao details her struggles with growing up: from her bad skin and hairy legs to Vietnamese mysticism and kinship, and bound throughout by familial loyalty and honor. With wit and poignancy, *We Are Here* explores an Australia of the 1980s and 1990s, and a family's tireless journey for peace through a young woman's absolute determination to find her place.

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