

# This or Something Better

## A Memoir of Resilience

By Elisa Stancil Levine

*Vivid, poetic, and intimate, This or Something Better reveals how true healing of deep wounds happens one exquisite layer at a time, and invites each of us to consider and embrace our own path toward wholeness and authenticity.*

When the Sonoma Complex fire came to Elisa's California doorstep in 2017, her world changed overnight. The devastating fire torched thousands of acres, but for Elisa, a world-class decorative artist, it was her reaction that night that cracked her wide open. A loving wife, mother, and grandmother, Elisa thought she had reckoned with her early childhood trauma. But when she fled the midnight firestorm without alerting a single neighbor, she had to ask herself -- Who does that?

In *This or Something Better* Elisa revisits her past and the one force where she found true kinship: the wild river. Nature, her lifelong ally, provided her solace when she faced secret abuse beginning at two years old. Through teen pregnancy, her baby's stillbirth, and a mystical near-death experience, nature shaped her character and later informed her wildly successful career. But was there an unintended consequence? What treasure awaited if Elisa could learn to trust *human* nature?

## Advance Praise

"In this beautifully written memoir, Elisa Stancil Levine . . . explores the combination of surrender and decisive action, trust and wariness, solitude and human connection, intuition and painstaking self-inquiry, grace and sheer hard labor that lie at the heart of the great mystery of human resilience."

~Noelle Oxenhandler, author of *The Wishing Year* (Random House) and *The Eros of Parenthood* (St. Martin's Press.)

## About the Author



Elisa Stancil Levine likens her Northern California childhood to a cross between *American Graffiti* and *Deliverance*. She left home at sixteen and as a teen mother earned a degree from community college, restored sixteen houses and was home and garden editor for Sacramento Magazine. At thirty-five she founded Stancil Studios, an award winning nationwide decorative finishes company. The company's national and international projects are featured in all major design magazines and online. Her memoir, *This or Something Better*, takes place in Northern California, Manhattan, and Paris.



Author: Elisa Stancil Levine  
Genre: Memoir

Pub Date: June 7, 2022  
Publisher: She Writes Press

Paperback: \$16.95  
ISBN: 978-1647423612

eBook: \$8.99  
AISN: B09CYPNNP2

Distributor:  
Ingram Publisher Services

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Elisa is available for events  
and book clubs, in person or  
via Zoom

# More about the memoir and the author . . .

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"Transformation is my wheelhouse. As a colorist and pattern designer I transform interiors of buildings. As a writer and an avid reader, I know transformation can also be sparked by words on the page."  
-Elisa Stancil Levine

## ***This or Something Better: A Memoir of Resilience***

- **Target market:** Women of all ages, female creatives, female entrepreneurs
- **Unique hook:** This memoir demonstrates the influence of nature and trauma on the career of an artist and maker. From a childhood deep in a canyon, a cultural cross between *Deliverance* and *American Graffiti*, the author forges an award winning national career as a colorist and decorative artist, working in Manhattan, London, Paris and across the US.
- **Key Themes:** Childhood trauma, teen pregnancy, single motherhood, drug dependence and recovery, all play into the formation of a successful, nationally recognized company single handedly created by a self taught artisan and entrepreneur. A combination of survival from trauma with successful entrepreneurship.
- **Will appeal to readers who enjoyed:** *Educated* by Tara Westover and *Hillbilly Elegy* by JD Vance. Readers seeking entrepreneurial, survival type stories of strong women.
- **Press and accolades:** Elisa's color and pattern design have been featured in every American design magazine, on the cover (twice) of *Architectural Digest*, and featured in *Elle Décor*, *House Beautiful*, *Veranda*, *Town and Country*, *Vogue*, *California Home*, *Luxe* and in newsprint and social media. Elisa is a former board member of The Institute of Classical Architecture and Art and a former board member of Creative Sonoma

Elisa and her husband live on a ranch on Sonoma Mountain and spend hours hiking, horseback riding and running in the forest. Meditating, travel, kayaking, mentoring and lecturing about color and pattern are current endeavors. *This or Something Better*, a memoir, is Levine's second book. A third book is in the works. Levine's essays have recently appeared in *Entropy Magazine*; *Stirring: A Literary Review*; *Penmen Review* and *Writer's Workshop Review*.

"Like many artists, my path to success was circuitous. How to see color, how to feel space and light, and how to translate it is a gift honed through hard work, trial and error. Much like writing about it!"  
-Elisa Stancil Levine

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