

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 . . .

"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
