

Elephant Touch

Susan R. Greenway

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In Susan R. Greenway's novel *Elephant Touch*, a girl learns to love again after a significant loss.

Quinn lost her mother in a skiing accident. In Thailand, her Aunt Lizzie hopes that volunteering at an elephant sanctuary will alleviate Quinn's grief. At first, Quinn sees her mother everywhere, including in the flora and fauna; she's unable to open up to Hunter, who wants to befriend her. When she sees how the elephants have been abused by their previous owners, she's heartbroken and wants to return home.

After being comforted by an older elephant, Sumana, who was blinded in one eye by her former owner's cruelty, Quinn starts to open up to those around her. When a baby elephant, Lee Lawa Dee, refuses to eat, placing it in danger, Quinn sympathizes at once. The story of how Lee Lawa Dee lost her parents deepens their connection.

Thailand's food, wildlife, and climate are at first unfamiliar and isolating for Quinn. But as she and other volunteers help to care for the sanctuary elephants—feeding them and caring for their feet—she acclimates. She hatches an idea to save Lee Lawa Dee, facing pushback from staff members and the reawakening of her own trauma.

In this careful and heartwarming novel, lessons about loss, finding love, and accepting comfort come through—in particular via Quinn's determination to help Lee Lawa Dee. Quinn learns that her connections to others are crucial to overcoming her loss, and the realization is a profound one. Further, the relationships that Quinn forms with the elephants are spellbinding.

In the comforting novel *Elephant Touch*, a grieving girl reconnects with the beauty of life around her thanks to the sympathetic influence of animals.

ALEENA ORTIZ (September / October 2024)

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