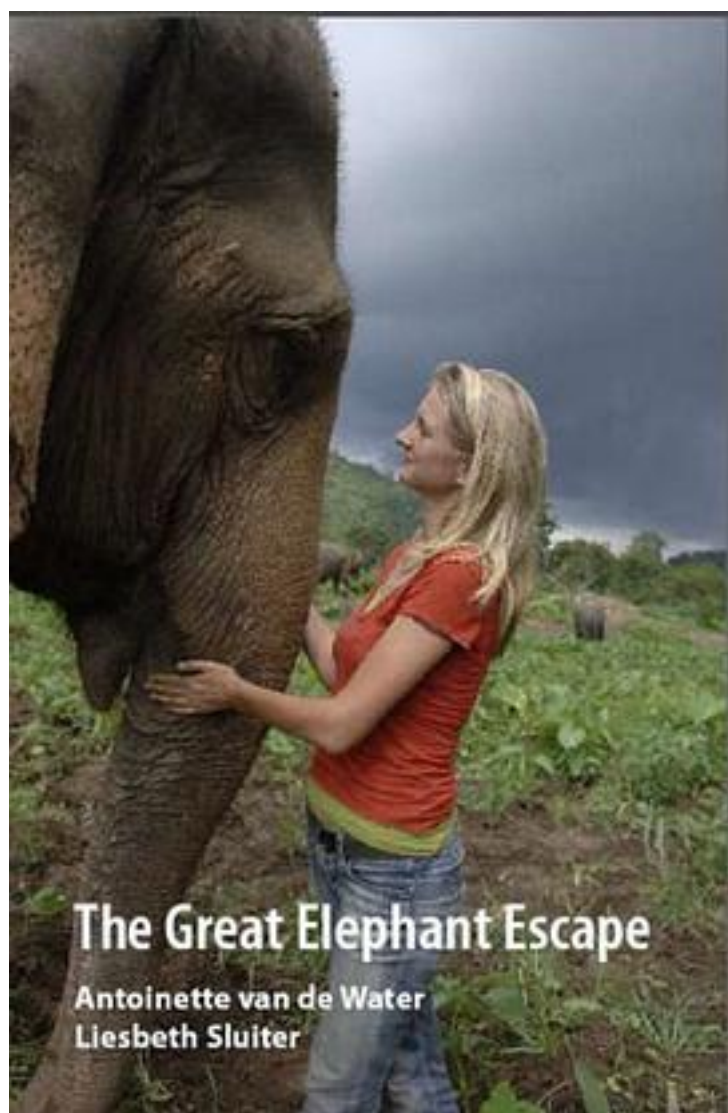


The Great Elephant Escape



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Street elephants are a common sight in Thailand. Some carry tourists on their backs, but most spend their days begging for food or money, urged on by their mahouts - their grooms and riders. The animals are often undernourished, in bad health, sleep next to garbage dumps, and walk along overcrowded highways with wounded feet. In the green pastures of the Elephant Nature Park, a sanctuary in northern Thailand, traumatized elephants can recover and begin to enjoy life. Antoinette van de Water worked as a volunteer in this park and, with the dream of getting every elephant off the street, started the a rescue project. "The Great Elephant Escape" describes the liberation of two street elephants and their journey to the Elephant Nature Park. It is a breathtaking adventure through the world of flirtatious elephant traders, poor villagers, well-wishing monks, and angry animal-rights advocates. Antoinette van de Water is the founder of 'Bring the Elephants Home', an organization working to create a better future for Thai elephants. Liesbeth Sluiter is a journalist and photographer based in the Netherlands.

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