



This Jade World

Ira Sukrungruang

“*This Jade World* is beautifully candid, funny, and heartbreaking, a startling meditation on intimacy and marriage, family history and legacy, and the strangeness of how relationships change.”

—Beth (Bich Minh) Nguyen,
author of *Stealing Buddha’s Dinner*

This Jade World centers on a Thai American who has gone through a series of life changes. Ira Sukrungruang married young to an older poet. On their twelfth anniversary, he received a letter asking for a divorce, sending him into a despairing spiral. How would he define himself when he was suddenly without the person who shaped and helped mold him into the person he is?

After all these years, he asked himself what he wanted and found no answer. He did not even know what wanting meant. And so, in the year between his annual visits to Thailand to see his family, he gave in to urges, both physical and emotional; found comfort in the body, many bodies; fought off the impulse to disappear, to vanish; until he arrived at some modicum of understanding. During this time, he sought to obliterate the stereotype of the sexless Asian man and began to imagine a new life with new possibilities.

Through ancient temples and the lush greenery of Thailand, to the confines of a stranger’s bed and a devouring couch, *This Jade World* chronicles a year of mishap, exploration and experimentation, self-discovery, and eventually, healing. It questions the very nature of love and heartbreak, uncovering the vulnerability of being human.

Ira Sukrungruang

Ira Sukrungruang is the author of five books, including *Buddha’s Dog and Other Meditations*, *Southside Buddhist*, an American Book Award winner, and *Talk Thai: The Adventures of Buddhist Boy*. He is the president of Sweet: A Literary Confection (sweetlit.com) and is the Richard L. Thomas Professor of Creative Writing at Kenyon College.



Publisher: University of Nebraska Press | Publication Date: Oct 1, 2021 | Format: Paperback | Price: 19.95
ISBN: 978-1-49622-601-3 | Page count: 272 | Genre: Memoir | Trim: 5.5 x 8.5
Publicity: Mindbuck Media, Kristen@MindbuckMedia.com

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Advanced Praise

“In *This Jade World*, Sukrungruang offers us a prayer and a meditation on the beginnings and endings of love. The love of parents and their children. The love among men and women. The love between the skin we live in and the memories we house. In this rare and beautiful offering, we experience a man undone by love and his journey to salvage hope in the face of incredible loneliness and doubt, a search for salvation found first in a dream.”

—Kao Kalia Yang, author of
Somewhere in the Unknown World and
The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir

“It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that when seemingly happy couples break up we all wonder what the hell happened. In Ira Sukrungruang’s affecting and vulnerable memoir, *This Jade World*, he narrates the dissolution of one marriage and the burgeoning of another as a double love story, laced with wonder, grief, downward spirals, and mature reinventions. Set in both Thailand and the U.S., examined against an epic web of family domestic strife and rearrangement, this gorgeously written book illuminates the necessity and complexity of intimate joy.”

—Barrie Jean Borich, author of
Body Geographic and *Apocalypse, Darling*

“*This Jade World* is compulsively readable—its short chapters are polished stones, each delightful by itself while leading us on to another, another, until we’ve walked the road through the author’s divorce and into his new life and love. Mostly set during his yearly visits to his family, Sukrungruang offers a keenly observed Thailand—the monks slipping their cellphones into their robes, the tattoo artist praying before pushing his needle into the author’s back. And throughout we have the deepest pleasure—that of language charged with imagery, leavened with humor, and pierced with insight.”

—Beth Ann Fennelly, author of
Heating and Cooling: 52 Micro-Memoirs

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Suggested Interview Questions

1. What drove you to write this book?
2. What is this book really about?
3. What scares you about this book?
4. What is something you'd like readers to take away from this book?
5. What books were influential in writing this book?
6. What are your future writing plans?

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