

The Spirit Catches You  
and You Fall Down

*A Hmong Child,*

*Her American Doctors,*

*and the Collision of Two Cultures*

Anne Fadiman

Farrar, Straus and Giroux / New York

Anne Fadiman is a virtuoso. Her reporting is deeply revelatory, her writing is elegant, and her story is gripping. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* is an unforgettable work of nonfiction literature.

—DAVID MCCLINTICK, AUTHOR OF *INDECENT EXPOSURE*

This is a captivating, riveting book—a must-read not only for medical professionals, anthropologists, and journalists, but for anyone interested in how to negotiate cultural difference in a shrinking world. Fadiman's ability to empathize with the resolutely independent Hmong as well as with the remarkable doctors, caseworkers, and officials of Merced County makes her narrative both richly textured and deeply illuminating. Sometimes the stakes here are multicultural harmony and understanding; sometimes they're literally life and death—whether in wartime Laos or in American emergency rooms. But whatever the stakes and wherever the setting, Fadiman's reporting is meticulous, and her prose is a delight. From start to finish, a truly impressive achievement.

—MICHAEL BÉRUBÉ, AUTHOR OF *LIFE AS WE KNOW IT*

When a Hmong child and her parents encounter the American medical system, what takes place is a veritable explosion that reveals the weaknesses and rigidity of both systems. Ms. Fadiman's painstaking research and extraordinary writing skills make this into a compelling story that, once started, cannot be put down. And yet *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* is also a unique anthropological study of our society, one that will endure and be referred to for years to come.

—ABRAHAM VERGHESE, AUTHOR OF *MY OWN COUNTRY*

My hat is off to Anne Fadiman for a compelling piece of reportage. The pace and the color are brilliant.

—RICHARD SELZER, AUTHOR OF *MORTAL LESSONS*

So extraordinary is this tale, no conventional label comes to mind. It is a story of the tragedy of an ill child, a debate between two improbably clashing cultures, an essay on the limits of reason and authority. Anne Fadiman has yoked all three forms into a remarkable book which touches on every aspect of human capability and makes one feel at once more and less in control of life. This is a beautiful and haunting piece of work.

—ROGER ROSENBLATT

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