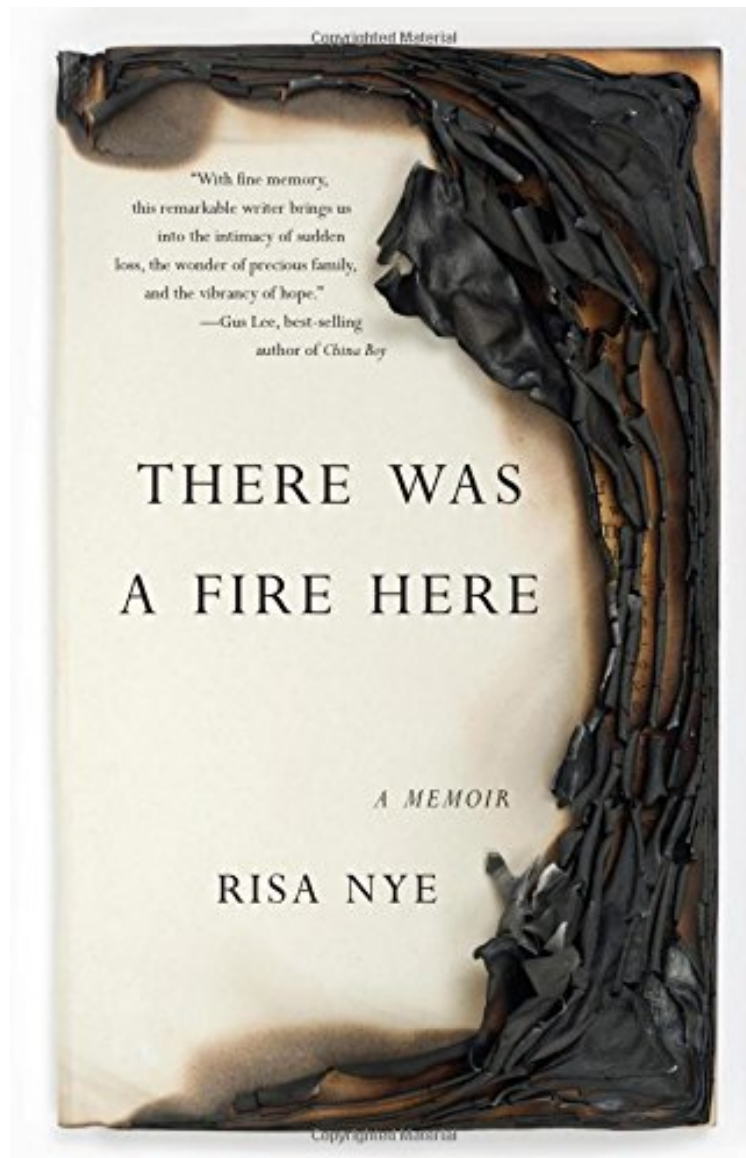


(Download free pdf) There Was A Fire Here: A Memoir

## There Was A Fire Here: A Memoir

Risa Nye

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**Risa Nye : There Was A Fire Here: A Memoir** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised There Was A Fire Here: A Memoir:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. How do you go on after a devastating loss? This is how.By JARenaldsHaving lived just outside the evacuation zone during the firestorm, I remember quite well what hell and fury that day brought to many in Oakland and Berkeley who lost homes, loved ones and the life they knew prior to that

weekend. Ms. Nye captures this catastrophe with incredible detail and clarity; the gut-wrenching fear, stress and sadness. I was honestly astonished that she could "go back" into the belly of the beast and tell this story of devastation, grief, optimism and yes, a little humor at times. I was especially touched by the "In Memory" page that paid homage to the 25 people who lost their lives in the fire. Although the firestorm is a hugely important chapter of bay area history, this book is a must read for anyone, ANYWHERE who has ever wondered, "how do I go on when I have lost everything?". Kudos to Ms. Nye, a skilled storyteller, for such a brave retelling of her family's personal journey back to their life "before".

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I read this in literally one sitting.....By Connie I had read some of Risa Nye's essays and articles so I was very interested in reading her book. I took it along when my neighbor and I went to the beach for a few days and although my neighbor can sleep through anything and specifically told me I could keep the light on in the hotel room when she said goodnight, I didn't feel right doing that, thus, I turned off the light and went to the only other room available. So, uh, when I say that I read *There was a Fire Here* in one sitting, well, um "*There was a Fire Here*" was enthralling, moving, heartbreaking, funny, insightful, horrifying, inspirational. Some of my favorite passages: A hot, dry wind blowing from the wrong direction, a demonic force, the devil's breath you cannot see makes trees sway, sparks fly, and embers leap from treetop to treetop, bringing heat and fire; and the fire, snapping like a fingernail on a match head, raged through anything in its path—anything at all. Everything. Houses collapsing onto themselves, imploding one floor, then another, until they piled on their foundations like smashed layer cakes—splintered, ruined, unrecognizable. It is gone, beyond my concept of gone. I used to lie in bed and watch as he shook his booty, creating amniotic tsunamis in my belly. I imagined them [the cats] pooling their knowledge in order to calculate the precise amount of thrust and velocity required to leap up and take a whack at the duck. Eventually, the cats sensed the futility of their duck watch. I'm not a writer, so all I can manage to say in conclusion is WOW! Just. WOW!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Compelling Read - Love, Loss, Hope the Oakland Hills Firestorm

By bnl I just received Risa Nye's excellent memoir and avidly devoured it in one fell swoop. The comments of Gus Lee capture the sense I had while reading the book; yes, Risa Nye's work does shine with radiant language, and her . . . lyrical, literate and beguiling voice ignites the fear of fire, love for children, and our powerful attachments to home and neighbors. She has given vivid shape to the confusion, calamity and sorrow of the specific events recounted by those of us who were variously touched by what is known locally as the Oakland Hills Firestorm, while capturing the universality of such horrific specters that can be understood by readers everywhere. This great read compellingly conveys ranges of emotions and physical changes experienced by the author and her family arising out of this disaster: a firestorm of epic devastation and loss of lives and ways of life that occurred a stone's throw from the University of California, Berkeley, campus. And, woven throughout the well-chosen descriptions of the environments old and new, and mechanics of surviving having lost virtually the entire material fabric of their lives, the author gently shares with us the central relationships and love stories that allowed Ms. Nye and her family not only to survive, but to continue to gain strength through their experiences. It is sensitive in its treatments of the many losses of those who lost their lives and of others who had not only lost their homes but whose families dissolved in the aftermath of the disaster, as well and it provides some of the best descriptions of events around the Fire itself in its several forms that I have read to date.

Less than a month before her 40th birthday, a devastating firestorm destroys Risa Nye's home and neighborhood in Oakland, California. Already mourning the perceived loss of her youth, she now must face the loss of all tangible reminders of who she was before. *There Was a Fire Here* is the story of how Nye adjusts to the turning point that will forever mark the before and after in her life and a chronicle of her attempts to honor the lost symbols of her past even as she struggles to create a new home for her family.

What would you take with you if your house was about to burn? What would you regret leaving behind? Risa Nye's searing memoir of loss is ostensibly about objects—the pictures, the shoes, the beloved baby blanket—but it's really about the love that holds a family together in its darkest moments. Told with humor and grace, Nye's story demands that we each take a moral inventory, then hold on tight to what truly matters most.

Zac Unger, Oakland firefighter, and author of *Working Fire* As Nye vividly and poignantly details the physical and emotional devastation of the 1991 fire that razed her home, erased her community, and reduced her memories to 'a past with nothing left to mark its presence,' she compels each of us to wonder, What would I take? How would I bear up? What does home mean to me?

Jill Smolowe, author of *Four Funerals and a Wedding: Resilience in a Time of Grief* Risa Nye's lyrical, literate and beguiling voice ignites the fear of fire, love for children, and our powerful attachments to home and neighbors. With radiant language that describes the devastating Oakland hills firestorm, she hastens the pulse as an unstoppable catastrophe threatens all and alters reality. With fine memory, this remarkable writer brings us into the intimacy of sudden loss, the wonder of precious family, and the vibrancy of hope.

Gus Lee, best-selling author of *China Boy* and *With Schwarzkopf* You can go home again, as Risa Nye demonstrates in this memoir of before-and-after the Great Oakland Firestorm of 1991 which destroyed over 3000 homes. While her blue house with a white door and daffodils in front was a still smoldering mess, she and her husband determined they'd build it back. Home became homecoming, and now with this

artful tale Nye embroiders her own life story anew with loving recollections of unique artifacts lost, from her pale pink wedding dress to a secret box of letters between herself and her husband. Home again, with memories of happy earlier days, of devastating loss and the strengths that can arise from adversity. Deirdre English, Professor, Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley About the Author Risa Nye lives and writes in Oakland, CA. Her essays and articles have appeared in a number of local, national, and online publications and anthologies, including *Fine Homebuilding*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *Skirt! Magazine*, *You and Me Magazine*, *Hippocampus Magazine*, *Chicken Soup and Not Your Mother's Books*, and *Oh Sandy!* She is co-editor of *Writin' on Empty: Parents Reveal the Upside, Downside, and Everything in Between When Children Leave the Nest*. She earned an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Saint Mary's College. She blogs at [www.risanye.com](http://www.risanye.com) and writes a semimonthly column about cocktails under the name of Ms. Barstool for [BerkeleySide.com](http://BerkeleySide.com). After a one-year blogging experiment, she wrote *Zero to Sixty in One Year: An Easy Month-by-Month Guide to Writing Your Life Story*. In her memoir, *There Was a Fire Here*, she details the events surrounding the devastating Oakland Hills firestorm of 1991 while sharing with the reader her recollections of what she lost and what she learned.