



Have Fun in Burma

Rosalie Metro

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Have Fun in Burma follows Adela, just out of high school, through her summer of self-discovery. No pizza binges and thoughtless beachside flings for this heroine, though. Rosalie Metro's earnest young lead is up for more of a challenge, and her choices bring into relief the unconscious imperialism in even the best-intentioned travel. The result is a rare "finding yourself" travel story done right, gently relating the grit and discomfort of a truly expanding consciousness.

Inspired by her friendship with a Burmese political refugee who works in the cafeteria of her prestigious college prep school, Adela decides to spend her summer seeing the world. Armed with conviction and adolescent self-assurance, she signs up with Myanmar Volunteers United. For three months, she's to teach English to the monks at a Buddhist monastery. Instead, she gets a series of lessons of her own, each set against the backdrop of the country's Buddhist-Muslim conflict.

Metro's empathy for Adela's shortcomings make the story potent. Sure, she may hope that her ex-boyfriend sees her selfie with one of the Burmese children, but Adela's overriding motivation is to do the right thing. The right thing, however, is rarely as clear as the idealistic youth believes. Adela's coming-of-age lessons are all about the muddiness of being "good" and the discomfiting discovery that, whether we like it or not, we all play a role in the imperialist history of our school books.

Consciousness-raising without moralizing, *Have Fun in Burma* prods readers toward self-examination while remaining the kind of story that you'd devour in a long bath. Recommended paired with your favorite spicy takeout and a schedule free of interruptions—both for hurtling through the pages and for pondering their contents.

JESSIE HORNESS (March/April 2018)

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