

Elephant Company The Inspiring Story Of An Unlikely Hero And The Animals Who Helped Him Save Lives In World War II By Vicki Croke

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"Pressestimmen ?I have to confess?my love of elephants made me apprehensive to review a book about their role in World War II. But as soon as I began to read *Elephant Company*, I realized that not only was my heart safe, but that this book is about far more than just the war, or even elephants. This is the story of friendship, loyalty and breathtaking bravery that transcends species. . . . [Vicki] Croke is a natural storyteller. . . . *Elephant Company* is nothing less than a sweeping tale, masterfully written.??**Sara Gruen, *The New York Times Book Review***?Splendid . . . Blending biography, history, and wildlife biology, [Vicki Constantine] Croke?s story is an often moving account of [Billy] Williams, who earned the sobriquet ?Elephant Bill,? and his unusual bond with the largest land mammals on earth.??**The Boston Globe** ?Some of the biggest heroes of World War II were even bigger than you thought. . . . You may never call the lion the king of the jungle again.??**New York Post**?*Elephant Company* is as powerful and big-hearted as the animals of its title. Billy Williams is an extraordinary character, a real-life reverse Tarzan raised in civilization who finds wisdom and his true self living among jungle beasts. Vicki Constantine Croke delivers an exciting tale of this elephant whisperer?cum?war hero, while beautifully

reminding us of the enduring bonds between animals and humans.??**Mitchell Zuckoff, author of *Lost in Shangri-La and Frozen in Time*** ?The true-life heroics of Elephant Company during World War II highlight how animals and humans together can achieve extraordinary things. Croke?s evocative writing and deep understanding of the animal-human bond bring vividly to life Elephant Bill?s great passion and almost mystical connection with his magnificent beasts. This is a wonderful read.??**Elizabeth Letts, author of *The Eighty-Dollar Champion*** ?A spellbinding, true story of elephantine and human courage, set in one of the Earth?s most exotic jungles during the Second World War, Elephant Company is a triumph that will make you cheer!??**Sy Montgomery, author of *The Good Good Pig and Journey of the Pink Dolphins*** Über den

Autor und weitere Mitwirkende **Vicki Constantine Croke** has been chronicling animal life for more than two decades?tracking polar bears, Tasmanian devils, and Madagascar?s top predator, the fossa. She now covers animal issues for WBUR-FM, Boston?s NPR news station, on air (Here and Now) and on WBUR?s The Wild Life online. Her work there earned a 2013 regional Edward R. Murrow Award. She is the author of *The Lady and the Panda: The True Adventures of the First American Explorer to Bring Back China?s Most Exotic Animal*, and *The Modern Ark: The Story of Zoos?Past, Present and Future*. Croke has worked on nature documentaries for Disney and for the A&E channel and anchored *The Secret Life of Animals* on NECN-TV. She also wrote *The Boston Globe*?s ?Animal Beat? column for thirteen years, and has contributed to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The London Sunday Telegraph*, *Time*, *Popular Science*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *Gourmet*, *National Wildlife*, and *Discover* magazine, among others. She lives in the Boston area. Leseprobe.

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The Making of an Elephant Wallah
Chapter 1
The Shoulders of a Giant
Deep in the jungle-clad hills of northwest Burma, close to the border of the Indian state of Manipur, Billy Williams, delirious with fever, began to regain consciousness. Half dreaming, he scrambled to piece together what was happening. His lanky body felt cockeyed and unresponsive. Even opening his eyes seemed impossible. As hallucination gave way to reality, he remembered his predicament: He was stranded in an inaccessible forest, on the wrong side of the raging Yu River, during the dangerous, unrelenting monsoon rains of 1927, and he had never been sicker. His spiking fever was accompanied by chills. The lymph nodes at his groin were swollen to the size of fists, and some of the small pustules lining his feet and legs had broken open. For days he had been unable to eat and could barely drink. That morning he could not even stand. As the lashing rains tore at his clothes, he suddenly felt something that he couldn?t make sense of: His cot was lurching, as if it was trying to buck him off. Forcing his eyes open, Williams realized he was not on the wrong side of the river, but smack in the middle of it, riding an elephant through the churning avalanche of water.

Around him, deadly two-ton tree trunks shot down the rapids like missiles, crashing into one another with a sound like thunder. Blinking against the pouring rain, he seized the rail of the large bamboo cargo basket, or ?kah,? he lay in as it

rocked him back and forth, perilously close to the frothing current. The elephant was pitched at a steep angle, leaning his flank into the wall of water, shouldering all his weight against the chocolate-colored torrent in an effort to keep his footing.

Yet Williams felt oddly lucky. That was because of the elephant he rode. There was no way Williams could mistake the animal's identity?even in his feverish state, slumped high up in a basket. The broad expanse of the gray back, the delicate pink freckling bordering the ears, and the rakish slant of the gleaming white tusks, their tips just visible from this viewpoint?this was the only elephant who could brave the crossing: the strongest and most stouthearted creature in the forest, the best friend Williams ever had. Bandoola. Williams, who managed several teak logging camps, would eventually know a thousand elephants by name during his years with the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation. Of all of them, Bandoola was dearest to him, owing to his intelligence, virtue, and strength. Williams had confidence that even without a rider's guidance, "the great elephant knew what he was doing," using his own instincts and judgment for this passage. Not that a human voice could be heard over the pounding water, but Williams probably mustered the breath to at least whisper encouragement. He had made a habit of speaking to the working elephants in the language they were trained in?Burmese.

More than any other animal, he believed, they craved conversation. Their vocabularies, the number of words they understood, were astonishing, but to Williams, impressive as that was, there was something that counted more. These creatures could read underlying emotion, understand intent, perceive what was really being expressed. Now, verbalized or not, Williams would make plain to Bandoola that he was grateful and believed in him. The bull already knew how ill Williams was. Earlier that day, the mahouts, or "uzis" as they were called here, who worked for Williams had cinched a cargo basket to Bandoola's back. It was an unusual event for the tusker, who was a logging elephant, not one of the small pack elephants called "travelers." Nonetheless, he had stood patiently, head held high, ears flat against his neck, as the rain pelted his back and ran off his wrinkled hide in runnels. Soaking wet, his skin had inked into a deep purple. Elephants in Burma knew how to cope with monsoon. If he tilted his head forward, his large, bony brow ridge would shield his eyes from rain, and he could keep water from spilling into his nostrils by hanging his trunk down straight, curling it under at the very end. When a limp Williams was carried out of his tent, Bandoola's dark eyes, beneath their heavy, wrinkled lids and long lashes, tracked the movement, lending him the meditative look particular to elephants. Bandoola not only recognized Williams, he knew something was wrong. This person was different from the energetic, confident man who when visiting camp invariably produced a sugary tamarind ball treat for Bandoola, spoke to him, scrubbed his sandpaper skin exactly where it needed scratching, ran his hands along his hide, swabbed ointment on abrasions, and then slapped his flank good-bye. He had nursed Bandoola back to health for a whole year after a fight with another tusker, spending every day cleaning the wounds and applying antiseptic and fly repellent. Now Williams, the elephant saw, was as broken as Bandoola had been then. The

order? Hmit!? was given, and Bandoola sank down, back legs buckling first into the sludge, then the front. Several Burmese men, their colorful sarong-like longyis sodden with rain, struggled with slipping hands and feet to hoist the senseless Williams up to the basket atop Bandoola's shoulders. Two of them, Williams's closest servant, Aung Net, and another camp worker, would ride with him. As the body was passed upward, Bandoola swiveled his trunk, pressing his nostrils to Williams, and breathing in deeply. Even through Williams's clothing Bandoola was picking up organic clues, especially from the armpits and between the legs. Like all elephants, he was a master chemist, analyzing much of the world through his sensitive nose. Bandoola could ascertain innumerable facts about any animal: last meal eaten, fitness, anxiety level, or hormonal state. Elephants read one another—and people—this way. Bandoola's prodigious brain, highly evolved to negotiate a complex social world, kept a dossier of the men around him, especially Williams, whom he had known for seven years.

Scent was a critical part of that inventory. Williams's transformation into a seasoned forest man was telegraphed to Bandoola in large part by his body odor. Billy Williams smelled different as a veteran than he had as a recruit. Over time, his diet and smoking habits changed, the ratio of fat to muscle shifted, and his confidence around elephants grew, meaning certain hormones that often signaled fear were reduced. The city washed out of the man, and the jungle seeped in. When Williams had an opportunity for sex, Bandoola could smell that, too. What Bandoola inhaled this day was misery. With just a few whiffs of Williams's body, the tusker processed the rank breath, the change in hygiene, and the yeasty scent of an infection. Elephants routinely help other ailing elephants, lifting them when they cannot stand, feeding them when they are unable to forage. Are they capable of doing the same for people? Williams couldn't prove Bandoola was aware of his dire condition, but it damn sure felt that way to him during his flashes of consciousness. Like all the European teak men, Williams was a nomad of the forest. He knew illness and accident went with the job, that bouts of malaria were as frequent as colds were back home. Hundreds of miles—roadless, muddy, rain-drenched, wooded, and mountainous—from any medical help, he and his colleagues toughed out such episodes. Even the most robust among them could wither and die within days of something seemingly innocuous: a headache, a cut, a chill. "No one who works in the jungle," Williams once wrote, "calculates on a ripe old age as a near-certainty." The...".

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June 2nd, 2020 - the focus of elephant pany the inspiring story of an unlikely hero and the animals who helped him save lives in world war ii written by vicki constantine croke is on the work and travels of james elephant bill williams while in burma condensing williams own book titled elephant bill and his personal reflections into a detailed riveting narrative sprinkled with facts about asian elephant behavior

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June 2nd, 2020 - elephant pany tells the story of billy williams a british man who after the great war travels to burma to work for a teak pany this means months in the jungle facing illness leaches and lack of reading material williams does have something going for him however he loves animals

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May 14th, 2020 - the friendship of one magnificent tusker in particular bandoola would be revelatory in elephant pany vicki constantine croke chronicles williams s growing love for elephants as the animals provide him lessons in courage trust and gratitude but elephant pany is also a tale of war and daring

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May 7th, 2020 - elephant pany came highly remended from a member of our book club and it did not disappoint there were many interesting facts about burma the british monopoly of the teak industry and the lives of the men who ran it a highlight for most readers has got to be the building of the elephant ladder up an impenetrable sheer rock wall in 2 days

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