



The Opposite Field: A Memoir

Jesse Katz

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Here is one of the most remarkable, ambitious, and utterly original memoirs of this generation, a story of the losing and finding of self, of sex and love and fatherhood and the joy of language, of death and failure and heartbreak, of Los Angeles and Portland and Nicaragua and Mexico, and the shifting sands of place and meaning that can make up a culture, or a community, or a home.

Faced with the collapse of his son's Little League program—consisting mostly of Latino kids in the largely Asian suburb of Monterey Park, California—Jesse Katz finds himself thrust into the role of baseball commissioner for La Loma Park. Under its lights the yearnings and conflicts of a complex immigrant community are played out amid surprising moments of grace. Each day—and night—becomes a test of Jesse's judgment and adaptability, and of his capacity to make this peculiar pocket of L.A.'s Eastside his home.

While Jesse soothes egos, brokers disputes, chases down delinquent coaches and missing equipment, and applies popsicles to bruises, he forms unlikely alliances, commits unanticipated errors, and receives the gift of unexpected wisdom. But there's no less drama in Jesse's complicated personal life as he grapples with a stepson who seems destined for trouble, comforts his mother (a legendary Oregon politician) when she's stricken with cancer, and receives hard lessons in finding—and holding on to—the love of a good woman.

Through it all, Jesse's emotional mainstay is his beloved son, Max, who quietly bests his father's brightest hopes. Over nine springs and summers with Max at La Loma, Jesse learns nothing less than what it takes to be a father, a son, a husband, a coach, and, ultimately, a man.

This is an epic book, a funny book, a sexy book, a rapturously evocative and achingly poignant book. Above all it is true, in that it happened, but also in a way that transcends mere facts and cuts to the quick of what it means to be alive.

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