



THE MAKING AND
UNMAKING OF A
BUDDHIST MONK

A MEMOIR

turtle feet

NIKOLAI GROZNI

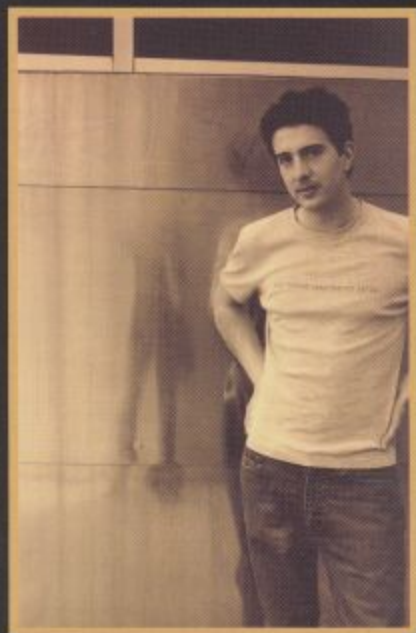
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In his early twenties, Nikolai Grozni, a celebrated Bulgarian music prodigy studying jazz piano at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, was struck by a malaise—some form of spiritual ennui—that suddenly robbed him of his passion for music and of any direction in life. He turned to meditation and Buddhism for answers, and eventually traveled to the Dalai Lama's university in Dharamsala, India, where he quickly became fluent in Tibetan and took the robes of a Buddhist monk.

Instead of finding answers, Nikolai fell in with an unusual cast of characters—feisty nuns, sex-starved monks, violent chess players, sadistic professors, and a fallen monk from Bosnia with a shady past. He struggled with Buddhist logic and philosophy and the thousands of small challenges to normal life that he had to overcome daily in the Himalayas. Grozni's wry, lyrical account of monks in their quest for the ultimate truth is insightful and revealing of an often mythologized world. His is a thoughtful, funny, and elegantly written memoir of searching for meaning and a higher power, but finding a world filled with chaotic, teeming, eccentric, and hilarious humanity.

Turtle Feet is a wonderfully bittersweet story of a spiritual journey and of the surprising people who can change your life along the way.



NIKOLAI GROZNI was born in Sofia, Bulgaria, and educated in the United States and India. In previous incarnations, he has been a piano prodigy, jazz musician, Buddhist monk, and most recently, the author of three novels published in Bulgaria. Grozni holds an MFA from Brown University. *Turtle Feet* is his first book of nonfiction.

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Nikolai Grozni

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Praise for *Turtle Feet*

“This is a rare and wonderful book, unlike anything I’ve ever read before. Rich in detail and humor, with a quirky and exotic cast of characters, it’s an exquisitely written journey through life in a Tibetan monastery and village, where a brilliant young Western monk encounters discipline, freedom, Buddhism, and himself.”

—Anne Lamott, author of *Grace (Eventually)*

“*Turtle Feet* is a remarkable book. Yes, it’s a spiritual journey filled with beautiful insights—but it’s also a funny and gritty tale of dysentery, stoner roommates, cranky monks and flirty nuns. I felt enlightened for having read it.”

—A. J. Jacobs, author of *The Year of Living Biblically*

“Funny, insightful, musical and poetic. One wouldn’t expect anything less . . . from a Bulgarian jazz-playing Buddhist Tibetan monk.”

—Etgar Keret, author of *The Nimrod Flipout*

