



LY HUY'S ESCAPE

A Story of Vietnam

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Chapter 1

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

This story is based on true accounts of what happened in 1970 when Vietnamese children were airlifted from Viet Nam when it became apparent that the Viet Cong were going to take over the country. No one in the story is “real”; however, much of what is told in the story is based on actual happenings during that time.

A Vietnamese pastor who read the manuscript of this story offered some interesting insights concerning his homeland: their system of family and given names, for example.

Van is the masculine adjunct.
Thi (Tee) is the feminine adjunct.
The family name is given first.
Given names follow the family name.

So the full name of the boy in our story is *Ly* (family name), *Van* (masculine), *Huy* (given name).

His sister is *Ly Thi Kim* (family–feminine–given name)

The masculine or feminine syllables are not used when the subject

is visible or pictured, since it would be obvious whether they are male or female.

Pronunciations:

The family’s last name: *Ly* = Lee.

The boy’s first name: *Huy* = Wee.

The girl’s first name: *Kim* = Kim (as in English)

The Vietnamese lady’s name: *Lan* = Lan(d)

Lan, however, is called: *Co* (young lady) = Co (ed); *Hai* (meaning second born) = High

Although the lady’s name is *Lan*, it is impolite to call her by that name. People are addressed by their rank which is determined by their birth. So the lady featured in this story is called *Co* (young lady) *Hai*, because she is second born. (Interestingly, in South Vietnam, the firstborn child is always ranked as second born.)

Our pastor friend says, “The Communists deny God; so there is no truth in them.” This truth should be sounded throughout America!

Ly Huy slept restlessly on his mat of straw.

It was not the hard floor of dried mud on which his mat was spread that made him restless. Neither was it the sound of war nearby. To these he long had been accustomed. Usually Huy slept soundly as do most nine-year-old boys. But it was Huy’s dream which disturbed him. In the dream he seemed to hear again the voices of village children. They told of listening to two strange ladies.



Show Illustration #1

One, they said, was a pale woman with yellow hair and blue eyes who spoke a foreign language. With her was a Vietnamese lady who showed them a black Book which told about a foreign God and how to get to Heaven.

In his dream Huy heard the boys and girls say, “The Book is magic. Our Buddhist priest said so. With this Book the pale lady gets boys and girls to go to the big city. There they take out the dark eyes of our Vietnamese children and send them to those of another land who have only blue eyes. Our priest says we must not listen to her. If we do, Buddha will be furious. Our priest made both women leave our village. He said, “The Vietnamese woman is under the spell of the light-skinned lady. Beware of the pale woman!”

Little Kim was not disturbed by dreams. She had learned, even as a baby, that her brother Huy always took good care of her. She felt safe when he was near. So she slept soundly on her mat next to him. Their mother and father slept close by in their one-room thatch-roofed home.

Huy felt someone shaking him awake. In the darkness he could not see who it was. Frightened, he sprang to his feet. *Have I been dreaming?* he wondered. *Or has the pale lady come to take me away?*

His mother’s soft voice soothed him. “Don’t be afraid, my son,” she whispered. “It is only that the guns are getting closer. Your father says we must escape. Shh! We must not waken Kim!”

Huy could barely see the shadowy figure of his mother as she felt her way around. Still whispering, she said, “I have packed a bundle with some clothing and food. You are to carry Kim and this stick. Your father will lead the pig. But if it gets lazy you poke it with the stick. Make him walk fast. We must hurry before the soldiers get here.”

Huy was wide awake now. He heard the pig grunt as his father tied a rope around its body.

They were on their way. On their way to where? No one knew exactly. Not even Father. He knew only that he must get his family beyond range of those guns. He was terrified of the enemy soldiers—terrified of what might happen to him and his family.