

Praise for
In the Shadow of Green Bamboos

“Few writers have the graceful and poetic sensitivity to ponder the past and allow it to bubble to the surface with the serendipity that C. L. Hoang continues to gift us in his writings. His life experiences, of being born in Vietnam and witnessing the war there, then moving to the United States to live, enable him to reflect the impact of time, cultures, and memories in this striking collection of stories, *In the Shadow of Green Bamboos*. Revolving around the family and the bonding that grows out of dark times into moments of light, these stories journey back and forth between war-torn Vietnam and the U.S., and between the now and the then—a veritable Pandora’s Box of gems that invite introspection and healing.”

—Grady Harp, MD, author of *War Songs: Metaphors in Clay and Poetry from the Vietnam Experience*, Amazon Hall-of-Fame reviewer, Goodreads Top-50 reviewer

“C. L. Hoang is a superb storyteller who weaves deeply emotional tales enhanced by rich memories of his childhood in Vietnam. He has a gift for describing a setting in such a way that one can almost taste the mung bean cookies, breathe the heavy, damp air of the monsoon season, or feel the vibration through the ground of bomb chains striking near Saigon. Yet the families and villages strive to carry on, with themes of love and family underpinning each story in this memorable collection, *In the Shadow of Green Bamboos*. For one who grew up in America during the 1960’s, these stories, set in both Vietnam and the U.S., resonated powerfully. Be sure to have plenty of tissues on hand.”

—Lynne M. Spreen, award-winning author of *Dakota Blues*

“C. L. Hoang sensitively traces the effects of the Vietnam War on a handful of characters—former soldiers, refugees, and their children. Each story is a complete and haunting tale of loss, grief, and resilience, but some of the stories also pick up characters from his published novel *Once upon a Mulberry Field*, giving us a glimpse into their future. His understanding of the inner lives of children is particularly keen.”

—Margaret Diehl, author of *The Boy on the Green Bicycle*

Grandma hugs Kimmie tighter. “You see, sweetie, someday when you grow up and have your own family, you may have to move away from the place you’ve lived all your life, away from your parents and other people you love.”

“But I don’t want to,” the little girl protests.

“Sometimes it just happens, baby,” Grandma says, soft as a sigh. “As it happened to *Ông Ngoai* and me many years ago, when we had to leave our families and our home in Việt-Nam.”

April in Sài-Gòn usually means the beginning of summer and happy times, with the return of the monsoon showers that bring out luscious red blooms on poinciana trees all over the city. But April 1975 was aflame with artillery fire as North Vietnamese tanks thundered toward the capital, and the threat of a final carnage hung like a deathly pall over the city. People with means had already fled the country, while the rest circled in panic, scrambling to find a last-minute escape. Even now, decades later, Grandma’s insides still knot at the memory of feeling trapped—that paralyzing fear and hopelessness as the end loomed ever nearer.

She can never forget that day in April 1975 when Grandpa rushed home at noon from the American bank downtown where he worked. Without a word, he scurried to shut the front door and all the windows before sitting her down at the kitchen table.

“We must hurry and pack,” he said breathlessly, his jaws set tight and his forehead dripping with sweat. “One suitcase each. We’re leaving in a couple of hours.”

“Where . . .” Grandma could not even finish the question, her voice suddenly deserting her.

“My bank, they received permission to evacuate the employees to America.” Grandpa blew air out through his cracked lips. Then the details came tumbling out in one big rush. “There’s a pickup place downtown we need to get to before five this afternoon. The bus leaves right on the hour for Tân-Son-Nhất Airport, so we *must* be there on time. And not a word to anybody. If this

leaks out, we'll be mobbed, and the whole thing will be called off.”

They stared speechlessly at each other, eyes wild, hearts pounding so furiously Grandma thought her eardrums might burst. *This* was the miraculous lifeline they had been praying for in recent weeks. Everyone knew the grim fate awaiting those who had “collaborated” with the Americans, the instant the Communists took over. It was widely believed that there would be a bloodbath of retribution countless times worse than the massacre in Hué during the 1968 Têt Offensive. So this was indeed their last, their one and only chance at self-preservation.

And yet—and yet she was overcome with terror instead of relief.

“What about your parents?” Grandma could barely get the words out, so tight and parched her throat was. Her hands were shaking beyond control; she had to pull them down into her lap and keep them there. She swallowed again. “What about . . . mine?”

Grandpa dropped his head under her pleading gaze, his voice a resigned whisper. “We can’t bring them. It’s employees and their spouses and children only.”

She started crying but bit down on her lip to stifle the sobs. Time, suddenly the rarest of commodities, was fast slipping away as they were dawdling. “You must at least go say goodbye to your parents,” she told Grandpa through the tears, pushing him toward the door. “Go now. Go. I will pack, and then I will run to go see mine. I won’t leave without speaking to them.”