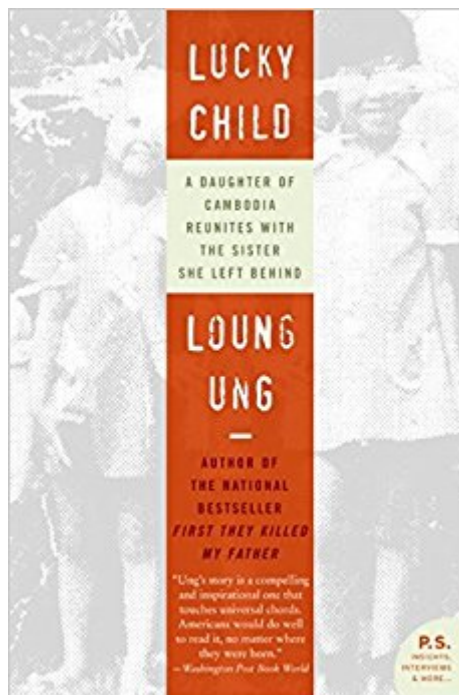


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# Lucky Child: A Daughter Of Cambodia Reunites With The Sister She Left Behind (P.S.)



## Synopsis

After enduring years of hunger, deprivation, and devastating loss at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, ten-year-old Loung Ung became the "lucky child," the sibling chosen to accompany her eldest brother to America while her one surviving sister and two brothers remained behind. In this poignant and elegiac memoir, Loung recalls her assimilation into an unfamiliar new culture while struggling to overcome dogged memories of violence and the deep scars of war. In alternating chapters, she gives voice to Chou, the beloved older sister whose life in war-torn Cambodia so easily could have been hers. Highlighting the harsh realities of chance and circumstance in times of war as well as in times of peace, *Lucky Child* is ultimately a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and to the salvaging strength of family bonds.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In her second memoir, Ung picks up where her first, the National Book Award-winning *First They Killed My Father*, left off, with the author escaping a devastated Cambodia in 1980 at age 10 and flying to her new home in Vermont. Though she embraces her American life—which carries advantages ranging from having a closet of her own to getting a formal education and enjoying *The Brady Bunch*—she can never truly leave her Cambodian life behind. She and her eldest brother, with whom she escaped, left behind their three other siblings. This book is alternately heart-wrenching and heartwarming, as it follows the parallel lives of

Loung Ung and her closest sister, Chou, during the 15 years it took for them to reunite. Loung effectively juxtaposes chapters about herself and her sister to show their different worlds: while the author's meals in America are initially paid for with food stamps, Chou worries about whether she'll be able to scrounge enough rice; Loung is haunted by flashbacks, but Chou is still dodging the Khmer Rouge; and while Loung's biggest concern is fitting in at school, Chou struggles daily to stay alive. Loung's first-person chapters are the strongest, replete with detailed memories as a child who knows she is the lucky one and can't shake the guilt or horror. "For no matter how seemingly great my life is in America... it will not be fulfilling if I live it alone.... [L]iving life to the fullest involves living it with your family." Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** Ung's autobiographical *First They Killed My Father*, 2000) chronicled her harrowing childhood under Pol Pot's genocidal regime, which claimed the lives of her mother, father, and two sisters. In an essential companion timed for release on the thirtieth anniversary of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge takeover, Ung unflinchingly continues her memoir with her arrival in Vermont alongside her sister-in-law and brother, who, able to "borrow enough gold to take only one of his siblings with him," chose his tough youngest sister as the "lucky child." Ung agonized over everyone she left behind, but especially regretted her 15-year separation from her last surviving sister, Chou. Here she tells their parallel life stories, effectively interleaving her own narrative of an '80s, valley-girl adolescence (laced with posttraumatic episodes) with chapters about Chou's growth to adulthood amid threats of land mines and Khmer Rouge raids. By daringly (and remarkably successfully) assuming her sister's point of view, Ung brings third- and first-world disparities into discomfiting focus and gracefully dramatizes the metaphorical joining together of her haunted past with her current identity as a privileged Cambodian American. When the narratives fuse at the sisters' long-awaited reunion, their clasping of hands throws wide the floodgates to tamped-down memories--a cathartic release that readers will tearfully, gratefully share. Jennifer Mattson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I ordered "Lucky Child" immediately after finishing the author's first book about her immigration from Cambodia following the genocide of 1975-1979. Though this book can be read on its own, you will have a much more complete picture of Loung's childhood experience in Cambodia if you read "First They Killed My Father". "Lucky Child" picks up when Loung is in high school in Sacramento. Though

she is trying to put the horrors of the past behind her, she has occasional flashbacks and moments of terror. She writes "...in the quiet recesses of my mind, the Khmer Rouge lurks and hovers in dark alleys, waiting for me at the bend of every corner. No matter how far I run, I cannot escape the dread they have followed me to America." Loung has lost touch with her closest sister in Cambodia, Chou, who married young and had children and has struggled to find prosperity and happiness in the deeply damaged country. Loung has always felt somewhat guilty about the fact that she was chosen to accompany her eldest brother to the refugee camp in Thailand where they were later sponsored for immigration to a small town in Vermont. Since Loung was the youngest surviving sibling, the family felt that she would have the best chance of getting an education and adapting to life in America. However, Loung's brother and his wife cling to Cambodian traditions and expect Loung to do so also. She chafes at their restrictions, hides the details of her background from her best friend in the new high school, and even changes her name to an American name - all so that she can blend in and find acceptance in her new country. Loung's brother Meng, had visited the family in Cambodia several times and sent them money which helped raise them from abject poverty. At first, Loung wasn't interested in returning to Cambodia, but eventually, Loung's brother organized a trip for them to return to a family reunion. Though their lives are very different by then, Loung reunites with her closest sister Chou. With all the siblings together for the first time in 18 years, the family honors their dead ancestors, while striving to put the past behind them. In her matter of fact and clear writing style, Loung allows to understand so much of Cambodia history and culture. Her ability to put the grim occurrences of the genocide in perspective and to find a way to move on and thrive is commendable. I look forward to reading her next book which starts when she's in college.

Amazing and powerful. I read "First They Killed My Father" while I was backpacking through Cambodia. It was so powerful to read Loung Ung's story of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime. All three are very much worth reading. Cambodia is one of my favorite places on Earth - the people are incredible and have overcome incredible odds. An entire generation was murdered and they are the most giving, kind, and loving culture I have ever come across. Thank you, Loung Ung, for sharing your incredible life story with us. We should all be so brave. You are amazing!

I loved the first book of the trilogy "First They Killed My Father". And I recently finished reading this one. I love this one for different reasons. It tells of the aftermath of the War in Cambodia. Some might think if you were a refugee from Cambodia who made their way to the United States in the

war's aftermath that everything would just turn out fine and dandy. And indeed in many ways it eventually did as Luong was able to start a new life with a "higher standard of living" than she likely would have had in Cambodia had she stayed there. And she does eventually reconnect with her sister Chou and many in the rest of her family as well in Cambodia. She finds her purpose in life and as a result does some good things in helping her deal with the war's pain. But before reconnecting with her family and finding her purpose she deals with the guilt and trauma associated with PTSD survivors as well as the culture shock she encounters trying to fit in to her new country, the United States. An easy to read book coming from a woman who's native language is not English. Impressive. I'd recommend this book to anyone wanting a glimpse of what it can be like for a refugee to adjust to life in the U.S.

Its answered so many questions I had for my family that they couldn't verbalize and that I would not ask. I knew they hurt and I didn't want to risk being insensitive. Other books and documentaries will state facts and flash scenes, but I couldn't connect until reading this. I understand better when they're locked away and in tears. Thank you to the author for helping me feel closer to my family.

This book kept my attention from beginning to end. I am so glad she continues her story with what happened to her family after she left Cambodia for America. So few Americans realize the suffering Cambodians endured under the Khmer Rouge not just for the three years they were in power but for the next two decades as things sorted themselves out. The Ung family are my heros.

This is the 2nd book in the series that I bought online immediatly after returning from a life changing trip to Cambodia. I picked up the first book, *First They Killed My Father*, at a book store in Phnom Penh a few blocks from the White Mansion Hotel, part of the old US Embassy, where I was staying. I was looking for something good to read on the flight home that would also give me some insight into what the genocide in the 1970s was really like for the people of Cambodia. This book was exactly what I was looking for and was beautifully written. I would recommend these books to anyone! I have never read such a page turner! I read the entire first book on my flight back back home and was thrilled to find this 2nd book in the series on . This book is just as much of a page turner and shows Loung Ung's life growing up in the US compared side by side with her sister's life back in Cambodia. Loung Ung is a great author and I even got to meet her at a book reading, my first and only, at a book store in Harvard Square shortly after I read her 3rd book, *Lulu in the Sky*. Read the books in order and you won't regret it! The books are beautifully written!

Poetic and devastating...she is a genius.

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