



The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood

By Kien Nguyen

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A story of hope, a story of survival, and an incredible journey of escape, 'The Unwanted' is the only memoir by an Amerasian who stayed behind in Vietnam after the fall of Saigon and who is now living in America.

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The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood By Kien Nguyen Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The son of a wealthy Vietnamese woman and an American businessman, Nguyen was nearly eight when Saigon fell to the Vietcong. For the next decade he and his family endured hardships brought on by the privileged lives they had enjoyed under the capitalist regime. Although his writing lacks the lyricism of recent memoirs like *The Liar's Club* or *Angela's Ashes*, Nguyen's voice is clear and strong, and he is adept at capturing both the broad sweep of life under the Vietcong and the peculiarities of growing up in a colorful and emotionally dysfunctional family during a jarring and vicious revolution. Perhaps the most engaging aspect of his memoir is its portrayal of the ironies that ensue when the old order collapses and the social hierarchy is turned upside down. At one point, Nguyen's mother, imperious and a virulent snob, is called before the newly installed communist leadership only to encounter her former gardener, a man she barely acknowledged before the revolution but who now has the power to strip her of all she owns. For the most part, though, this memoir reminds us of life's many undeserved injustices. Nguyen and his half-brother, Jimmy, who is also Amerasian, pay a particularly high price for the accident of their genealogy, enduring the scorn of their countrymen, especially the communists. At 18, the author and his family emigrated to the United States, where he now works as a dentist. With the purely personal goal of "healing" himself, Nguyen concludes by hoping that his narrative will also help other Amerasians born during the Vietnam War mourn their "lost childhoods." (Mar. 20)Forecast: This is part of a growing literature of memoirs about the horrors in Vietnam after the fall of Saigon. If well reviewed, this should sell well to readers with an interest in that conflict and its aftermath. In addition, film rights have been sold to the producer of *Driving Miss Daisy*, which could enhance sales down the road.

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From Library Journal

This is a powerful, compelling memoir of an Amerasian boy's experience in Communist Vietnam from 1975, when the United States troops pulled out, until his family's migration to the United States in 1985. The illegitimate son of an American G.I. and a wealthy Vietnamese woman, Nguyen is now a dentist in New York City. Initially, he wrote this book as a kind of personal catharsis, but he decided to publish it as a memorial to the thousands of Amerasians who have suffered and died. His story, which recalls *The Killing Fields*, recounts a descent from wealth and comfort into the horrors of Communist rule. In painful detail, he writes of poverty, suffering, and torture, much of it inflicted on him precisely because of his Amerasian roots. Ultimately, his tale is one of extraordinary courage and human will, for Nguyen and his mother held their family together in the face of great hardships. Beautifully written and inspirational, this memoir is highly recommended.

- *A.O. Edmunds, Ball State Univ., Muncie, IN*

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From [Booklist](#)

The "unwanted" in the title refers to the Amerasian children who resulted from U.S. involvement in Vietnam from the late 1950s to 1975. Kien has blond hair and blue eyes and is only eight when Saigon falls to the communists in the spring of 1975. He is at the American embassy with his mother and other family members waiting for the last helicopters to leave Vietnam. However, one helicopter crashes and the other flees, leaving hundreds of Vietnamese stranded in hostile territory. His mother, once a wealthy banker, is left with nothing after her house is "given" to a Communist Party member; and Kien and his brother are considered

half-breeds by the conquering North Vietnamese and by their own neighbors and some relatives. Together with his mother, younger brother, grandparents, and a former servant, Kien learns to survive by trying to grow up early. When an attempted escape turns tragic, Kien becomes a prisoner in Vietnam. This is a moving memoir by someone who was forced out of childhood by war and its many disruptions. *Marlene Chamberlain*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ronald Ralph:

Book is to be different for every single grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different content. To be sure that book is very important normally. The book *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood* seemed to be making you to know about other understanding and of course you can take more information. It doesn't matter what advantages for you. The e-book *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood* is not only giving you much more new information but also being your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your own spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship while using book *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood*. You never really feel lose out for everything in case you read some books.

Benjamin Hoffman:

The book *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood* will bring one to the new experience of reading a book. The author style to spell out the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to read, this book very acceptable to you. The book *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood* is much recommended to you to learn. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can quickly to read the book.

Jerald Higgins:

The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that may increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to get every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood* however doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource info that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information can easily drawn you into brand new stage of crucial contemplating.

Merlin Doyle:

Is it you who having spare time in that case spend it whole day by means of watching television programs or just laying on the bed? Do you need something new? This *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood* can be the solution, oh how comes? A fresh book you know. You are consequently out of date, spending your extra time by reading in this brand new era is common not a geek activity. So what these publications have than the others?

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