



## The Ugly Daughter

*Julia Legian, Dawn Burke*

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## **The Ugly Daughter** Julia Legian , Dawn Burke

*The Ugly Daughter* is a thrilling memoir, the gripping true story of a young girl who witnessed horrific murders and who overcame cruel abuse and unimaginable tragedies to find love and happiness.

Julia Legian's emotionally, harrowing and fascinating memoir reveals how she endured a series of unbelievable tragedies and heartbreaking abuse from the hands of her parents and great aunty, and how she rose above her horrendous past to have a happy life. It's beautifully written with simplicity and shocking honesty. *The Ugly Daughter* is a wonderful reminder that regardless of your social background or environment you came from, you can rise above the tragedy and survive. This book also clearly demonstrates that anything is possible if only you have firm faith in God or your creator. It's an amazing story of miracles, shocking reality of domestic violence, survival and extraordinary luck. This really is a powerful and touching story that must be read.

This volume covers Julia's life from growing up in Vietnam to the journey to Sungei Besi refugee camp when her family escaped the horrors and the aftermath of the Vietnam War. The second volume of the story, not yet released, is in production and has legal implications that have to be carefully managed. It covers their arrival in Australia and the challenges and nightmares that they faced there.

## **The Ugly Daughter Details**

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Author : Julia Legian , Dawn Burke

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## **From Reader Review The Ugly Daughter for online ebook**

### **Leigh Wilson says**

This book is one of the most memorable books that I have ever read and I have no doubt that many other readers will feel the same way about it.

It is a remarkable and powerful story that illustrates how the human spirit can overcome the most traumatic and ghastly experiences.

Told through the eyes of an intelligent, mischievous and energetic young girl, this autobiography takes us through some of the events of Julia Legian's earlier childhood growing up in Vietnam and beyond.

Many of these stories are unbelievably harrowing, in part as a result of the era and conditions that she lived in, but equally because of the people who were in her life at that time.

However, presented through the eyes of the innocent child that she was, with her great sense of humour and mischievousness, they lose much of their "grimness", so that, rather than being driven to the depths of sorrow and despair as I otherwise might have been, I found myself eagerly forging on with fascinated anticipation to read of her next adventures.

And of course there are many light-hearted, happy times as well.

Julia has provided the light and shade of her early life brilliantly so the reader goes through the widest ranges of emotions. For me, reading this book became a unforgettable and emotional journey rather than a simple passive reading experience.

Having listened to the radio interview on blogradio.com with her, as I read the book, I was constantly and utterly amazed at how, after all that she experienced, that she is now such a positive and unencumbered person, who has refused to let her past define her present or her future.

More than just about any other book that I have ever read, this book demonstrates the potential of the human spirit. It shows us how, with the right mental attitude, courageous people can deal with the most extreme experiences, and, rather than being scarred by them, how they can use them for their personal emotional and spiritual growth.

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### **Sara G says**

This was an incredibly interesting book about one girl's horrifying childhood in Vietnam in the 1980s. It's interesting that it's told in a matter of fact, conversational tone, although the subject matter is awful at times. The only part I disliked was the abrupt ending. I prefer complete novels to cliffhangers like that. Otherwise, this book is well worth the read. Truth is stranger than fiction, that's for sure.

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### **Jan says**

At first I thought, an autobiography who's author is a bit over 40 years old, couldn't be a very convincing. Big mistake! The book caught me - at first quite off guard - from the first to the last page. As I wrote in one of the status updates: It made me reflect on my own happy childhood and leaves me quite thoughtful. You should put this on your to-read list for sure!

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### **Kaleena Rheeysa says**

"The Ugly Daughter" is a true story of a young girl named Loan who lived in Vietnam in the 1970's. Much of the material in the book is heartbreaking as Loan and her family struggle to live day to day. Despite the hardships, this is an endearing story about a fierce young girl who never deters from who she really is despite what she is put through.

Important to note that this is just the first part of the story. The book leaves at quite a cliff hanger. I highly recommend this book for anyone who is curious about the conditions in Vietnam after the war and the lives of the families that resided there.

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### **Elyse Walters says**

I like Julia Legian - Goodreads friend, a remarkable survivor, filled with vitality!

This is Julia's memoir --the courage it took living with abuse as a child -in poverty -hungry - with loss - without love when she needed it most --often betrayed in Vietnam and how she escapes.

My heart broke when she lost her one best friend.

What I didn't like was the ending. It came to a sudden stop --(a second book on its way). I didn't like the discovery.

I wanted to read Julia's story out of 'friendship-and-relationship'...(happy to do so) ...but I don't need more. One complete book would be more my style.

Julia had a story to tell --and for the most part --she told it well! Its sad any child --from any country has to experience what she did!

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### **Lorraine Sears says**

Julia Legian takes you on a very personal journey in this the first volume of her memoirs.

Reading some of the atrocities she witnessed as a young child, and the hardships she endured will bring a tear to your eye more than once.

The writing is raw and basic, never once dressing up what is without doubt one of the most shocking and

compelling things I have ever read. What makes it all the more astounding is that despite living in Vietnam during an intense political and military period, young Loan (Julia) goes through much worse at the hands of her parents and extended family, than she's even aware is happening around her to her fellow countrymen.

This book will never win an award for perfect English, but than again, you're not reading it for the beauty of the language. Julia's personal story moves between highs and lows at such a pace; I can imagine her writing it, trying to capture every detail of what her life was like as a child. Every joyous moment and every terrifying encounter, painted on the page in honest, simple language that never fails to convey her thoughts and feelings.

I am very much looking forward to reading the next instalment.

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### **Jill Dobbe says**

The Ugly Daughter is a riveting read and one that I had a hard time putting down. I am already looking forward to the next installment!

Loan (the author's given name) goes through numerous harrowing experiences that easily could have left her for dead. She believed that there was something or someone watching out for her, which I also believe had to be the case. In her youth, Loan suffered from hunger, poverty, and extreme abuse at the hands of her parents. She also comes very close to losing her life as the result of a near death experience with a falling coconut, a hand grenade exploding, and a near drowning that almost takes her entire family down.

The author's memoir is well written and fast paced. She is incredibly honest with the details of her life and her descriptions are vivid and realistic. The photos included in the book were a nice touch and I would have loved to see more, especially of her parents and siblings if any exist.

The Ugly Daughter is an emotional memoir that can be compared to others like it such as, The Late Homecomer by Kao Kalia Yang, and First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers by Loung Ung.

It is a story of incredible odds and one that makes you fully aware of what some human beings have to go through to survive in this world. I look forward to reading the rest of Legian's incredible story.

Jill Dobbe, Author

HERE WE ARE & THERE WE GO: Teaching and Traveling With Kids in Tow

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### **Maryellen says**

The first thing that you need to do when you read this book is look at the cover. Look at that smiling woman who looks like she could be your very best friend and the life of the party! Remember that beautiful face and that affecting smile because you'll need to know that the child you're reading about survived the horrors and trauma that no one should ever endure to become that lovely woman. Without that knowledge, this book would be entirely too difficult to read.

Julia Legian (a.k.a. Loan Thi Nguyen) was born in South Vietnam in the early 1970's (the actual year of Julia's birth is unknown) into a poverty stricken family to parents who in this reader's opinion, never deserved to be blessed with their seven children. What you will read in these pages is the author's vivid account of growing up abused and neglected. But that's not all you'll read. You'll read about a child who found beauty in a refugee camp; found friends in the most unlikely of places; kept her faith; and never gave up on the one person in her life who loved her unconditionally, her Grandmother.

There were times in this book that I was moved to tears. What Julia had to endure at the hands of her parents and some of her extended family members was heartbreaking. She spent her childhood both starved of affection and starved of nourishment. There was seldom food and when there was food, it was food that Julia had to beg for. There were terrifying moments in Julia's life where anyone would have given up on their family, their faith, their life. Julia has never given up. Today she is a happy and thriving woman, wife and mother.

By Julia's own admission she's not a writer. She is instead a person who has a story that is so compelling that told even in her simplistic style, will leave you reeling at its abrupt ending. I couldn't be more anxious for the next installment from this author about her incredible life.

Please don't think that this book is a "pity me" story. It couldn't be more opposite. Julia doesn't want pity. She doesn't want you to do anything but find your own way out of your own deepest darkness. That's what this book is about. If Julia could find her way out of the utter desparity that she grew up in; well then, there's hope for all of the rest of us.

Hope. That's the message of this book. Hope.

☆☆☆☆☆

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### **Sarah says**

This is an engaging, yet confronting account of the author's childhood in Vietnam during the 70s and 80s. The horrors she faced at a tender age make me appreciate my own innocent, unburdened childhood. From verbal and physical abuse, to near drownings, and being witness to shootings, suicide, public execution by firing squad, and an acid attack, the author's reactions to these disturbing events show her tough character. In between the dark moments of her childhood, there are rays of light: the love of her grandmother, and friendships formed. It is during these moments that her entrepreneurial streak and cheeky spirit shines through. I found myself rooting for her, especially when she finds herself on a boat of refugees fleeing Vietnam. I only wish the ending of the book was not so abrupt. I am hoping for a sequel so that I can read the rest of her story.

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### **Kim says**

*Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to the possibilities; Truth isn't.* - Mark Twain. The setting of this memoir reads like a popular young adult (adolescent) dystopia or post-apocalyptic genre work of fiction. I am the same generation (Generation X) as the author and remember a

world where some countries were governed by some group's distorted idea of an utopia society that really was a totalitarian dystopia, and if you didn't fit that idea of their utopia society you were eliminated. For example, I remember having a disbelieving chill in my heart as an elementary school girl having my teacher mention the social engineering policies of the Khmer Rouge (an offshoot of the Vietnam's People Army) in Cambodia and how you could be "purged" for among many things being "too smart".

Instead of focusing on the setting of post-war Vietnam and becoming a dry historical reference, post-war Vietnam is just that, setting in the background of the real focus of the memoir, which is the childhood story of Loan/Julia from 6 years of age through the beginning of adolescence. She witnesses or is a victim by family of emotional/physical abuse, neglect, poverty, and other domestic atrocities that are problems that transcend the homes of children in any country or time of history to this very date.

Despite the horror and tragedies that were part Loan/Julia's life, the memoir does not fall in to the trap of making the reader feel the purpose of the work is evoke commiseration, pity, shock, or horror for the author. Loan/Julia's childhood resilience through adversities, sense of humor, ability to find playful amusements to entertain herself even in abyssal conditions, industrious work ethic, creative financial entrepreneurial spirit, and overall ability to rely on faith in every adverse situation made for a positive edifying read. Reading about Loan/Julia I was reminded of a quote by British philosopher James Allen, *"Of all the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul which have been restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this- that man is the master of thought, the moulder of character, and the maker and shaper of condition, environment, and destiny."* This is a motivational memoir of a psychologically self-actualized woman, whom despite her childhood background is today extremely successful in her both her personal life and financial life.

You can easily reason that she wrote this memoir (with her co-author Dawn Burke), with the idea that telling her story honestly would help many people whom have gone through great tragedy, know that you can rise above your circumstances and survive, and not let it handicap you from having a successful life.

There is a sequel in the works and I look forward to reading it.

Sensuality content: Clean. You are told, but not shown that the father is a womanizer.

Source: My personal purchased library.

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## **Martha says**

The Ugly Daughter was a free download from Amazon. I was intrigued by the graphic details of the life in Vietnam. Julia's life was so difficult. Her parents treated her with such harsh words, threats, and fear. I kept reading each page wondering how is she going to live through this situation. I'm amazed she survived. Knowing how much I love my grandchildren, I truly understand the deep connection she had to her grandmother. Julia's story should give hope to anyone that is hungry, cold, sick, penniless, or without a trust in a higher power than humans. Her eyes saw so much and yet her trust that God would help her never wavered. This story is rich with culture, spirit, and human strength. It's the type of story that I will ponder for a long time wondering how can humans endure so much and then pull themselves up and out of terrible situations and follow their dreams.

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## **Camille Khairallah says**

I really enjoyed reading Julia Legian's biography The Ugly daughter. I recommend it to anyone who loves learning more about foreign cultures with a twist of somewhat "supernatural" stories that make it seem too good to be true!

I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did :)

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## **Karl Wiggins says**

WHAT!! What happened there? Mid-line this book just finished, leaving the reader feeling they've been ripped off. It just stopped mid-action.

This was always going to be a 3 Star, but after ripping the reader off like that it's never going to get more than 1 Star from me, and I certainly won't be buying Book Two just out of principal because it finished on such a cheap shot. As far as authors are concerned, this is the ultimate sin. Bringing the story to a grinding halt without even dropping down through the gears first. What a scam! I hate that!

I've just checked the title and this book is called 'The Ugly Daughter: A thrilling real life journey to self discovery, riches and spirituality.' Riches? Spirituality? Where. We finish the book and the little girl, Loan, is poor as a church mouse. And the only spirituality is a few ghosts popping up every now and again.

Now I've just read the book description in detail, which I don't always do, and found the line, "The second volume of the story, not yet released, is in production and has legal implications that have to be carefully managed. It covers their arrival in Australia and the challenges and nightmares that they faced there." So I guess it's there, in the small print. This is only half a book. You've got one story in two separate books, so you have to pay twice as much. I am really pissed off!

Dictionary.com describes a "series or group of plays, novels, operas, etc., that, although INDIVIDUALLY COMPLETE, are closely related in theme, sequence, or the like." In ancient Greece, you'd have a series of COMPLETE and usually related tragedies." And there's the rub, for when you pick up a book you expect it to be complete of itself.

This isn't. What a scam.

The Ugly Daughter could be such a fascinating story; it IS a fascinating story, it describes a world that most Europeans, North Americans and Australians know absolutely nothing about, life in Vietnam in the 1970s for a dysfunctional and penurious family, destined to become Vietnamese Boat People.

Julia Legion's parents are ferocious in their violence towards each other, and Loan and her sisters were often caught in the crossfire.

However, and this is a BIG however, Legion writes about her life in such dispassionate terms that it becomes almost like reading a little girl's diary. Events that would traumatised most children, possibly for life, are described in rather abstract and detached terms. For example, here's a brief extract;

“ .... A beautiful, gentle and pale young girl of sixteen or so sat. She had long shiny hair down to her waist. Next to her was another girl of about twelve, clutching the older girl’s arms. The older girl addressed Bai in this manner.

“Dear Uncle, we were being punished by the North Vietnamese. They took all our possessions and they sent our parents to death camps. My sister and I had no choice but to leave .....

“Bai’s reply came in the form of three rapid deafening gunshots from his gun as he shot the girls at close range. I watched in shock as part of the older girl’s bloodied head landed on my feet. The two girl’s dark hair was matted with blood as they died in each other’s arms.”

Well that’s pretty dramatic, and although Loan is distraught and wipes the blood off her feet before running home as fast as she can, we move quickly on to another story about her father helping injured people. And just before that tale we hear of hundreds of people being shot as they went down the river on an overcrowded riverboat whilst Loan and her family ate lunch by the shore. Loan ran to the pier and slipped onto the boat. And this is all written in such a detached and deadpan manner.

Now I could put this down to poor writing skills except for the fact that to assist her in authoring this book Legion actually hired a creative writing teacher who had “published several books on writing.” With such material available to her, you’d think a creative writing instructor would be able to really breathe life into these salient and arresting scenes, for there is much in the book that is appaling, monstrous and shocking, yet even with professional assistance Legion still fails to create emotion in the reader. And that’s how I read this book; interested but detached. It’s a crime that what should be such an absorbing tale leaves the reader feeling impassive.

Ah, who cares? 1 Star for ripping the reader off!

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### **Clara says**

A free kindle book , which is poorly written still is stunning book about a Vietnamese girl child who lives in abject poverty in South Vietnam. Apparently there will be a second book because this one left off without fulfilling the promise the author made at the beginning and has the reader hanging at the end.

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### **Brian Levene says**

The Ugly Daughter is one that I can honestly say is an interesting read. It is a moving story about the life of a Vietnamese family that will pull you in and never let you go until you’re finish reading it. We tend to forget sometimes the sheer determination it takes to survive our situations in life. If you ever had to struggle in life then this story will be easy to relate to. It is a true testament of the saying, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Good job Julia & Be Proud! Never let anyone take away from the courage it took to write this story.

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