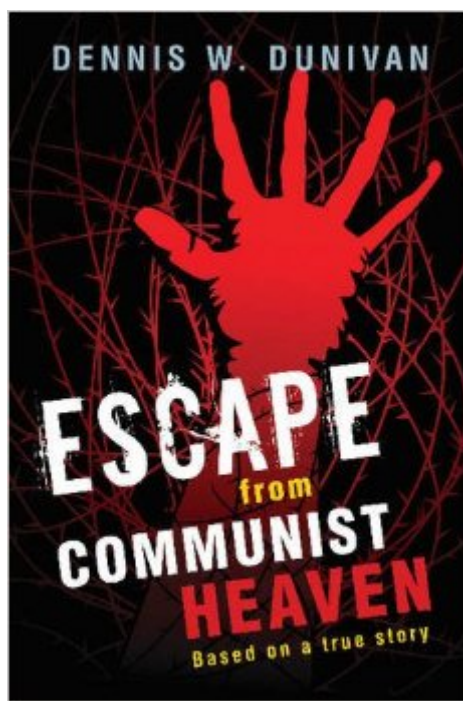


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# Escape From Communist Heaven



## Synopsis

For Viet Nguyen, the only thing worse than rules are the people who enforce them. This may not be the best attitude to have in a society that punishes dissent with death. A rebellious teenager is often the main character of young adult fiction, but what makes Viet particularly interesting is that he challenges a system that borders on genocide. Communist tanks advance through Viet's Saigon neighborhood when he is fourteen years old, and overtake the Presidential Palace as American helicopters retreat over the South China Sea. During the frantic evacuation, the American Embassy isn't able to destroy secret files containing the names of South Vietnamese intelligence officers. Viet's father is one of these officers. Within days, the city is infiltrated by communist soldiers who take over public buildings and spies who move into local neighborhoods. To survive, his family must keep a low profile. Viet's life was better during the war. With the Americans gone, he has little hope for freedom and must watch his every step. But his rebellious spirit gets the upper hand and he is arrested in the black market, becoming one of more than a million people in labor camps spread across the jungles of Vietnam. Viet's captors have a dream. When everyone on earth is under their control, they believe, we will have reached Communist Heaven. Many of the prisoners are ex-soldiers. Others are religious leaders, academics and anyone who might provide leadership against the new regime. Tens of thousands of these prisoners die of starvation, malaria and physical beatings. Viet is determined not to be one of them. He uses the same daring that led to his arrest to create a chance to break free. Based on the true story of Viet Nguyen, this novel is about a teenager who makes some mistakes and faces the consequences. To know freedom, he must not only escape from prison, but also from his country.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although this is a fictional novel it is based on the true experiences of Viet Nguyen and his journey of seeking freedom from South Vietnam at age 14. The author wrote the novel through the eyes of a teenage boy trying to adapt to the rule of communism in his country. Freedom, self-worth, and basic living needs were abruptly stolen from Viet and his family. The author was able to capture the fears that set in when the communist rule made it's way into South Vietnam. Despite their best attempts, Viet's family was unable to escape the reality that their lives were soon to change in a way they could not wish to imagine. Viet's rebellious nature led to his being taken prisoner to a labour camp where he faced unimaginable torture under communist leadership. The novel shares the internal and external fight that Viet kept in order to gain freedom as his ongoing motivation. The author was descriptive in setting the scenes of Saigon, the labour camps, jungles and complex waterways. Themes flowed throughout the novel while sharing the resiliency and determination of Viet, his parents and family in their fight for freedom. The author wrote of the complex dynamics and roles within Viet's family and the relationship that he held with his peers and later with co-prisoners at the labour camps. It was evident that Viet felt an ongoing confusion and indescribable anger towards communist rule as he continued to follow commands that went against his learned values in order to stay alive. It was clear that the author spent a significant time with his research in order to share his fictional account based as close to fact as possible. He did not sugar coat the poverty, disease, torture and death, it happened and he told it as it was. My one criticism is that the ending felt rushed and abrupt. I would recommend this novel to ages 14 and up. I commend Dennis W. Dunivan for penning this story that needs to be shared and to Viet Nguyen for being a positive advocate for freedom and change

I fell in love with this book from the moment I read the first sentence. Its fascinating to know that this book is based on true events. Viet Nguyen is a complex character with a rebellious need to challenge the authorities in order to stay true to himself. The author does a wonderful job bringing the characters to life and one cannot help to connect with them as you go through the story. The detailed description of the different places are also very helpful and allow the reader to travel to the heart of Vietnam without leaving their house. I think that this book can be enjoyed by anyone between the ages of 13 and 100. The author gives a real description of the camps and its prisoners but its nothing that might scare the younger generations. I definitely know a lot of teenagers who

would enjoy this book because they can identify with Viet's adventurous spirit and strong personality. Viet's story needed to be told and I believe Dunivan did a great job telling it. I strongly recommend this book!

Centered on the true events of Viet Nguyen's experiences living in Saigon at the fall of the city, this novel by Dennis Dunivan takes us into a part of history that is little publicized and often purposefully forgotten. Dennis's vivid descriptions of events, places, and characters bring the story to life in ways that many novels cannot achieve. While this novel is a young adult novel, readers of all ages will connect with the gritty emotions and heartbreaking realities that Dennis portrays. From the very physical attacks to the more psychological ones, the Vietnamese prison camps are described in eye-opening details that transport the reader into the past, in a way that is unforgettable. Perhaps the most compelling part of this novel is that it is based on true events. We are all aware that there was a war in Vietnam, and that there were prison camps and horrible situations that many people were forced into. But very few of us have exact, detailed accounts of real families' experiences during this period of history. This novel gives us a look into the atrocities that people had to face. In the wake of the events in North Korea that are currently unfolding, this novel is particularly relevant, and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Dennis's novel is a wonderful display of what historical fiction should be. He successfully brings the horrors that occurred after the fall of Saigon to the forefront of our minds, in a way that not only gives me the historical facts, but also the raw emotional connection to the families and what they were going through. Dennis's honest, heart-wrenching portrayal of Viet Nguyen's experiences will stay with me for a very long time.

Based on the survival story of fourteen-year-old Viet Ngyen, *Escape from Communist Heaven* takes you through a rollercoaster of emotions as you witness communism through this young man's eyes. The story begins on the day American troops withdraw from Saigon, Vietnam and the communist government takes over the city. Caught between the values his parents have taught him and the communist ideals impose on his people, Viet must learn how to keep a low profile and pass unnoticed until he can escape the country. Through hardships and tortures this young man never loses sight of what is important: freedom for him and his family. The reader is able to experience this young man's emotions as if they were their own. Dunnivan does an amazing job bringing his friend Viet's story to life in his book. Though parts of this story are fictional, the book is so well written that reader does not realize where reality ends and fiction begins. *Escape from Communist Heaven* puts a face to the horrid life of millions of Vietnamese under communist Saigon. This book

is a must read!

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