



Boat People

Mary Gardner

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This powerful narrative, winner of the 1993 Associated Writing Programs award for the novel, focuses on Galveston, Texas, and a community of newly arrived Vietnamese. Struggling to maintain a balance between Vietnam and America, they live with one foot in each world. Close-knit families, now fragmented, dream of the "kingdom of elders left behind"; young girls shoulder responsibility far beyond their years; and homesick professionals, puzzled by American customs, strive to belong while clinging to the rituals that sustain them. Seared by memories of escape and loss, these people are tough and funny too. There's Trang, obsessed by her mixed parentage and the quest for her American father; spunky little Xan, who acts out with Kung Fu; Linh, whose mother is hospitalized because of "the ghost husband in her head"; and Dr. Nguyen, savvy first-year medical resident but still a stranger. As this deeply felt novel examines the difficulties and possibilities for connection in a tri-racial culture - Vietnamese, Black, and American - it brims with memorable characters finding their way or easing the way for others. Mary Gardner reminds us of our history: America itself is a country of boat people with ties to more than one world.

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