

Join Anne, Liz, and Jacob as they unlock the secrets of their magical gifts!

I start at one end of the fan and trace the figure of the rat with my finger. My whole body shivers. Something amazing happens. I can't believe my eyes!

Perceptive and creative Jacob, the youngest Nguyen kid, is tired of everyone always telling him what to do. Why can't others accept that he wants to play hockey and perform the Lunar New Year fan dance with his cousins? And what's wrong with wearing his áo dài tunic to school when it makes him feel so special?

Confused and frustrated, Jacob turns to the mysterious fan Grandma Nội gave him and his memories of her to help him figure out how to be himself—even when that means many different things at once.



Also available: Books 1 and 2



US \$7.99 / CDN \$8.99



Also available as an e-book

annick press  
annickpress.com

3

THE NGUYEN KIDS The Mystery of the PAINTED FAN

annick press

THE  
NGUYEN KIDS

# The Mystery of the PAINTED FAN



written by

Linda Trinh

illustrated by

Clayton Nguyen

THE  
**NGUYEN KIDS**

*The Mystery of the*  
**PAINTED FAN**



written by  
Linda Trinh

illustrated by  
Clayton Nguyen

 **annick  
press**  
toronto • berkeley

© 2023 Linda Trinh (text)

© 2023 Clayton Nguyen (illustrations)

Cover art by Clayton Nguyen, designed by Aldo Fierro

Interior designed by Aldo Fierro

Cover and interior based on the series design by Paul Covello

Edited by Katie Hearn

Copy edited by Eleanor Gasparik

Proofread by Mary Ann Blair

Annick Press Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this work covered by the copyrights hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical—without the prior written permission of the publisher.

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, and the participation of the Government of Canada/ la participation du gouvernement du Canada for our publishing activities.

Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: The mystery of the painted fan / written by Linda Trinh ; illustrated by Clayton Nguyen.

Names: Trinh, Linda, author. | Nguyen, Clayton, illustrator.

Description: Series statement: The Nguyen kids

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20220412707 | Canadiana (ebook) 20220412715 | ISBN 9781773217710 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781773217727 (softcover) | ISBN 9781773217734 (HTML) | ISBN 9781773217741 (PDF)

Classification: LCC PS8639.R575 M97 2023 | DDC jC813/.6.Àidc23

Published in the U.S.A. by Annick Press (U.S.) Ltd.  
Distributed in Canada by University of Toronto Press.  
Distributed in the U.S.A. by Publishers Group West.

Printed in Canada

[annickpress.com](http://annickpress.com)

[lindaytrinh.com](http://lindaytrinh.com)

[claytonnguyen.art](http://claytonnguyen.art)

Also available as an e-book. Please visit [annickpress.com/ebooks](http://annickpress.com/ebooks) for more details.



# CHAPTER 1

## Go Kings Go!

*BUZZZZZZZZZZZZ*

Yes! It's my shift!

The feeling of my blades on the ice is the best as I skate toward the centre line. My teammate Kayden beats me there, so he takes the faceoff to start the third period. I line up on his left like a tiger, ready to pounce. Go Kings Go!

Puck drop!

The Eagles player shoots the puck over our blue line. My teammate Emma stops it and passes it up to Kayden. He bolts to the Eagles' end. I go with Kayden.

An Eagles guy bumps Kayden from the side. He takes the puck back to our end. I'm like a dragon as I change direction and chase after him. My friend Nam and Emma are all over the Eagles players. Everyone is bunching up around our net.

Dad's voice is in my head—*Stay open, buddy!*

I glide to the right side. The Eagles' number 7 has the puck. He trips over his stick and crashes into Nam. The puck is loose. It's coming right at me!

This is it! My chance!



I rake the puck to me. Turn around. Skate to the Eagles' end. Everyone is crowded around our net still. I take the puck up the side.

It's just me. My heart is racing. I'm so fast. I'm a horse in the Vietnamese zodiac dashing across the ice.

I'm close to the net. Stop quick. Look at the far corner. Aim. And shoot!

The goalie dives toward me. The puck slides across the line.

I score!

I raise both hands in the air. My heart is bursting with joy, and everyone is cheering and clapping. It's my first goal of the season!

"Way to go, Jacob!" Kayden says behind me. I high-five him and Emma and Nam too.





My shift ends, and I skate back to the bench and look over at the bleachers. Grandpa Nội claps. He holds up four fingers on each hand. I know he means my jersey number. “Number 8 lucky!” Grandpa Nội said when I first got it last month in October. Usually, only Dad comes to my games. I love when Grandpa Nội comes too.

After the game, I feel okay that we lost. I scored!

“You saw it? My goal?” I ask Dad as he helps me take off my hockey stuff in the dressing room.

“Great job, buddy. Up the side! Like I said!” He smiles.

Dad keeps saying he wanted to play hockey when he was a kid, but he was too poor. So he’s really excited. He used to like hockey more than I did, but now I like hockey a lot.

Nam and his dad are beside us. “Good goal, Jacob!” Nam’s dad, Chú Vãn adds.

“Cám ơn, Chú.” I say thank you, one of the only things I can say in Vietnamese.

As Dad takes off my helmet, my hair gets stuck.

“Ouch, Dad!” I rub my head.

Dad starts to take off my neck guard and shoulder pads. “Your hair. We have to cut it or tie it.”

“I don’t want to cut it. It’s the helmet.” I swing my legs, pretending I’m a monkey playing around. “It’s too small.”



“I guess you’ll need a new one. We’ll go this weekend.” He takes off my skates.

“I know what kind I want.” I look over at Emma as her mom puts her awesome helmet in her hockey bag.

New helmet! New team! This hockey year is going to be great!

## CHAPTER 2

# Getting My Way

“Jacob? Ready to get your helmet?” Dad asks me Sunday afternoon as he and Mom clean up our lunch of rice noodles with grilled pork and fish sauce.

“Almost, Dad,” Anne says before I can talk.

I’m in the dining room, cleaning Grandma Nôi’s altar. I take the washcloth and wipe her picture frame and the incense holder, my bottom



lip between my teeth as I focus. I don't like people speaking for me. I frown and spill some of the ashes on the altar table.

Anne, my oldest sister, watches me closely like a cat. She's so picky. Now that I'm eight and in grade three, Anne says this is my job. My other sister, Liz, who is nine and in grade four now, used to have this job. Liz says Anne thinks she's the boss of us.

I want to ask Anne, who is eleven and in grade six, what her job is, but I know that's not how it works in our family.

I wipe up the ashes. Dad and Mom say we Vietnamese believe the spirits of our family, our ancestors, stay with us after they pass away. Grandma Nội died over two years ago but she

stares at me every day from her altar picture. She's fuzzy in my memory, more of a feeling than a person.

“Can you pick up Liz from Rohan's on the way home?” Mom asks Dad from the kitchen.

Dad puts on his boots at the front door. “Sure, if we ever get to the store! Come on, buddy!”

“He's done now,” Anne says.

Grrrr. I think of a buffalo, silent and staring. That's not me. I can talk for myself.



At the sports store, I sit on the bench as Dad looks at different sizes and styles of helmets. I'm swinging my legs again like a monkey. When I get



home, I want to draw monkeys swinging around trees.

“Black again? Or white this time?” He holds up two different helmets.

“I want that one. Like Emma has.” I point to a helmet on the shelf behind Dad. It’s so nice. With this helmet on, I could be like a bright dragon flying across the ice. No one could catch me. It’d be awesome!

“The pink one!” I add.

Dad doesn’t say anything.

“That one. THE PINK ONE,” I say again, louder this time.

“Jacob?” Dad whispers.

“That’s a girl’s helmet!” an older boy sitting at the next bench says out loud.

“Alex!” A grown-up, probably his dad, says to him. “Enough.”

“But it is,” Alex keeps going.

His dad pulls him up and they walk away.

“I like pink,” I say, crossing my arms across my chest. I wear Anne’s old shirts all the time. Some of them are pink.



Dad is not saying yes. Dad *always* says yes to me.

“I don’t know. You’ll have this helmet for a while,” he says finally. He looks around and then shifts from one leg to the other, like a dog ready to run.

My heart is beating fast. I stand up. “I don’t want black or white.” I stomp my left foot. “I want the pink helmet.”

Dad checks his phone. “We have to pick up Liz. Let’s think about it and come back later.”

Dad throws on my toque and rushes me out of the store.

Why am I not getting my way?

## CHAPTER 3

# Grandma Nội's Gift

When we get home, Anne is painting her nails in the family room. I'm still mad I didn't get what I wanted. Liz tried to tell jokes in the car, but I just looked out the window and kicked my legs.

“Can I do mine too?” Liz asks and sits across from Anne at the low table.

“Be careful!” Anne says. She has pink nails, like the color of bubble gum.



Liz is picking out like seven different colors.

“Can I have blue and pink, all glitter?” I say and sit down next to Anne. I like painting too, so my monkey drawings can wait.

Dad looks at me. “You have school tomorrow. Will you wipe it off before then?”

“Why does he have to?” Liz asks. “Mom lets me wear nail polish to school.”

“Boys don’t wear nail polish. I haven’t seen any with it on,” Anne says softly.

“But they can,” Liz replies.

Anne pauses and then nods.

“I’ve painted my nails before,” I say back.

“When you were younger,” says Dad as he looks around. “Where’s Mom? Let’s ask her.”

I stand up. “First the helmet. Now this! Not

fair!” I stomp all the way upstairs. Mom hears me and comes out of her room.

“Jacob, baby, what’s wrong?” She tries to hug me.

“I’m not a baby!” I yell. I slam the door to my room.

I look around at my stuffies, hockey posters, drawings on the wall, and pencils and paper everywhere.

I breathe in and out. I don’t get it. It’s just a stupid color. But I want it. I *always* get what I want!

My heart feels like when I spill my hot chocolate before I can drink it. Grrrrrr!

I flop down on my bed, my face in my pillow. Something hits me on the back of my head.

Oww.

It's the painted fan, Grandma Nội's gift to me. Somehow it got knocked off the shelf above my bed. I wonder . . .

I pick it up. It has a wooden frame, and it's very old. I open it and it's blue like the sky.

The twelve animals of the Vietnamese zodiac are painted in black ink across the fan. I used to play with it like all the time, pretending to be each animal. Not so much now. Rat, Buffalo, Tiger, Cat,





Dragon, Snake, Horse,  
Goat, Monkey, Rooster,  
Dog, and Pig.



There is an animal  
for each year, in a twelve-  
year cycle, over and over again. Each animal has a  
different personality. I don't really know those. I  
just think about what the animals are like in real  
life. And I was born in the year of the horse.





Grandma Nội is also a horse, born a long time before me. Dad tells me that's one of the ways Grandma and I are alike. Maybe that's why I got the fan. Anne got her jade bangle and Liz got her pearl earrings.

Dad tells me to talk to Grandma when we light incense, but I never know what to say. Not like Anne, who seems to listen every once in a while, and whisper to Grandma, like when I help her cook one of Grandma Nội's recipes.

Mostly, I remember Grandma Nội when I play with my fan. I remember her warm hugs and hair curling along her neck. My heart feels better

thinking about it, warm like when I drink hot chocolate after tobogganing.

I look at the animals on the fan. I wonder . . .

I start at one end of the fan and trace the figure of the rat with my finger. My whole body shivers. Something amazing happens. I can't believe my eyes!