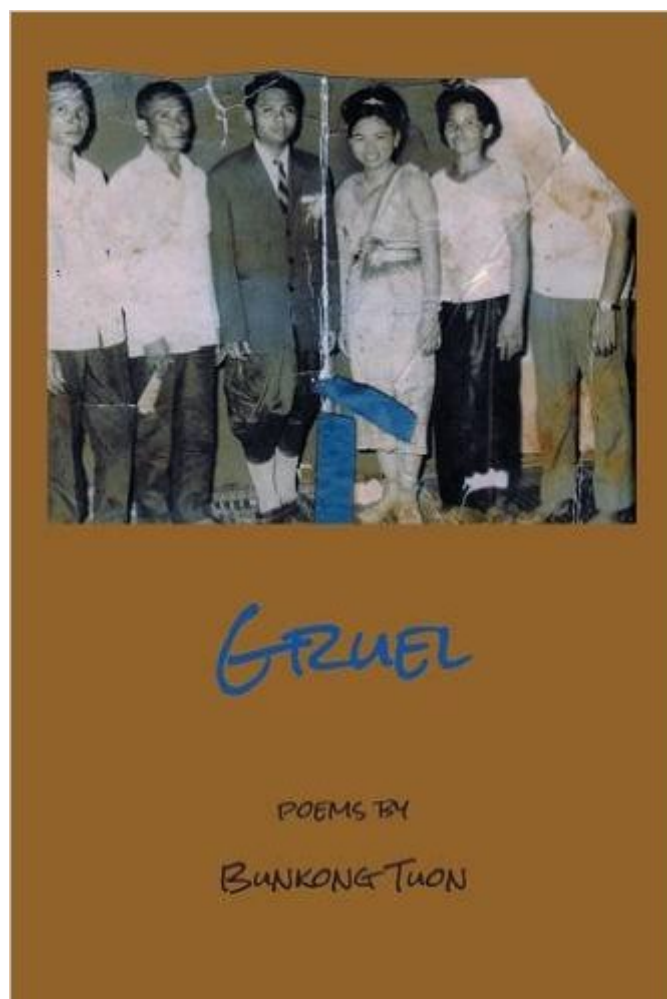


The book was found

Gruel



Synopsis

In his first full-length collection, *GRUEL*, Bunkong Tuon documents the lives of Cambodian refugees and explores the poetic landscape of a Cambodian America. Written tenderly, with honesty, intelligence, and occasional humor, *GRUEL* is populated by survivors such as a boy who loses his mother to the Khmer Rouge regime, a grandmother who risks her life to steal a few grains of rice for her grandson, an uncle who is beaten by Thai military police for night fishing outside a refugee camp, an aunt who leaves the East Coast to buy a donut shop in California, a father who re-experiences the traumas of the Cambodian Genocide, a young man who discovers Charles Bukowski in a Long Beach public library, a professor who teaches about the horrors of war to college students at a private college in Upstate New York, to name a few. It's a book about memories, ghosts and haunting, personal loss and historical traumas, losing and finding home, discovery and self-invention; above all, it's a book about love, sacrifice, and hope.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bunkong Tuon is a very good and skilled poet. This, his first book, is an excellent start to what will likely be a long and talented career. It's a biographical book arranged largely chronologically about his life as a Cambodian refugee escaping the Khmer Rouge with his grandmother, coming to America to a new life and the challenges that presented. He describes growing up on the East Coast, being teased and bullied because of his Asian heritage. He describes his family's dedication to one another and his mother's death at the hands of Pol Pot. He gives us his moving to the West

Coast, to Long Beach, with family members, to a new life there as a teenager. He describes his (bad) career as a student, his jobs working in warehouses and as a custodian. We learn of his going to the Long Beach City Library and his discovery of Charles Bukowski, which changed his life and his learning forever. I can certainly relate to that because I, too, hated most poetry and literature until I discovered Bukowski myself and he opened up a whole new world to me, one in which any type of poetry with any topic was possible. It kick started my career as a poet. Tuon went on to go to Cal State Long Beach (my alma mater), graduating and going on to graduate school back on the East Coast. Along the way, he meets his wife, who is also an academic and they enjoy discussing literature and academics. After he gets his doctorate, he's surprised to be given a job at a small liberal arts college in New York, where he is today and writes of his students and his teaching, his wife's efforts to finish her own studies, and her attempts to learn Khmer culture. There's a lot of sadness and humor in this book and it makes for a nice, comprehensive look at his life.

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