



TAWAN

THE SUN GIRL

WRITTEN BY
CHAY DOUANGPHOUXAY

ILLUSTRATED BY
ALEX KUNO

About the Reading Together Project:

The Reading Together Project seeks to address the lack of children's books that speak to the experience of being an Asian Pacific Islander (API) child or youth in the United States. The project supports the development of English literacy skills while recognizing cultural heritage, and creating opportunities for children and families to learn about API cultural heritage together.

Written by Chay Douangphouxay

Illustrated by Alex Kuno

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Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans and

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First Edition



DEDICATION:

It's not often that dreams do come true,
but mine was an exception.

I dedicate this fairy tale with love as our
family legacy to my darling sisters
Kat, Tina, Pamela, Angela, and Paula Chanthakhoun.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

It's quite difficult for me to acknowledge everyone who has brought me to this point. You have all touched my life in one way or another. However, there are those without whose love and support this book could not have been completed.

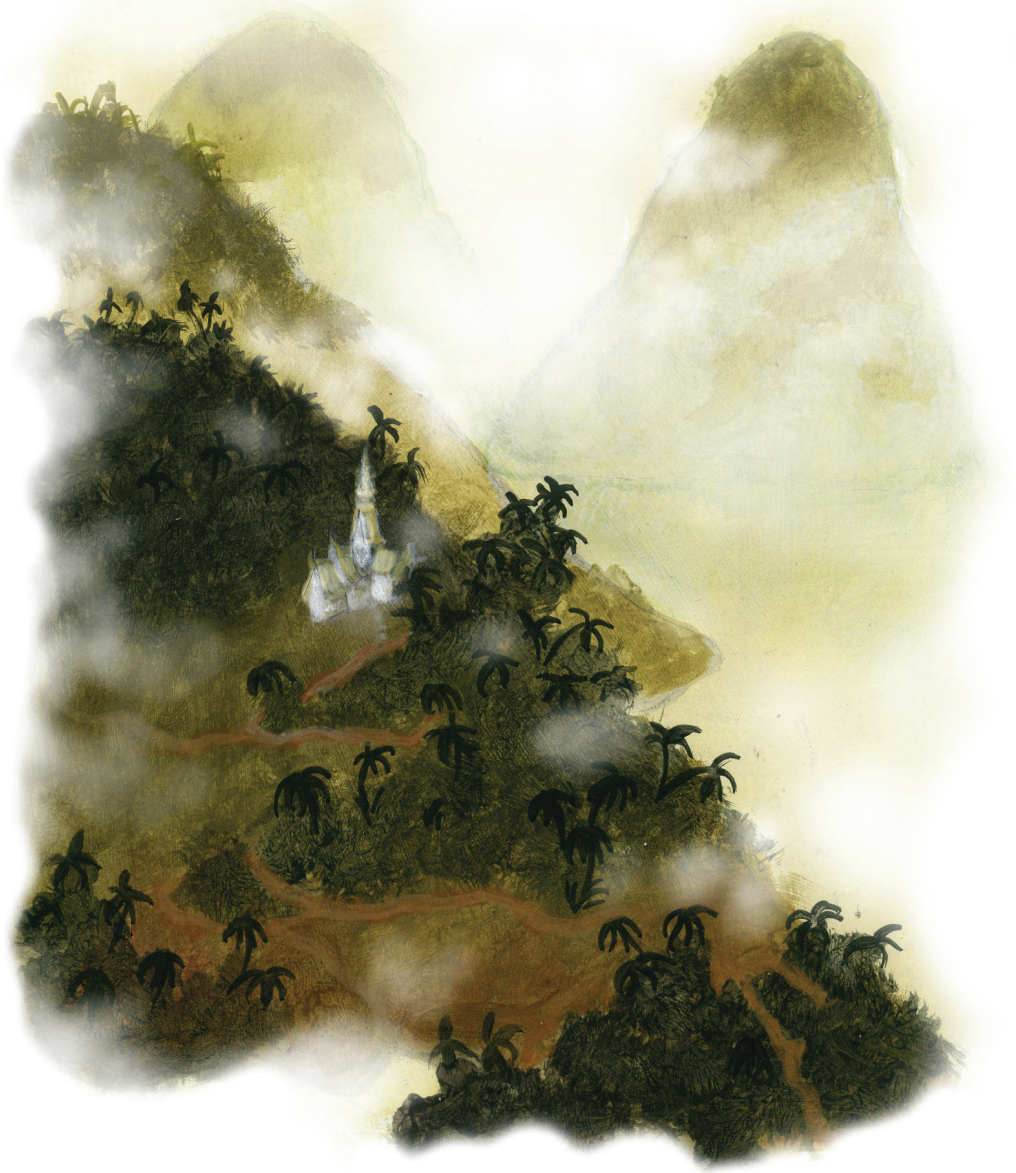
Thank you, Mom, for the endless nights you spent reciting delightful fairy tales that gave my imagination the wings to fly. Jerica Price, I don't even know where to begin. I'm not sure why you put up with me, but I am grateful that you do. Thank you for always believing in me. Tracy Grant, whose friendship and kindred spirit has been a springboard for me to bounce my ideas off of even in the wee hours of the night. My illustrator, Alex Kuno, whose incredible talent brought this imaginary world to life. It is a great honor and privilege to work with you.

Project consultants, Sally Heuer and Kim Jackson, for their flawless editing and design. Sia Her and Pa Yang from CAPM for spearheading this project. And with sincerest gratitude to Kham Vang, Casey DeMarais, Elizabeth de Soto, and the rest of the Minnesota Humanities Center staff for all of their administrative support. Thank you for giving my imagination a chance and for making my dream a reality.

~ Chay Douangphouxay ~

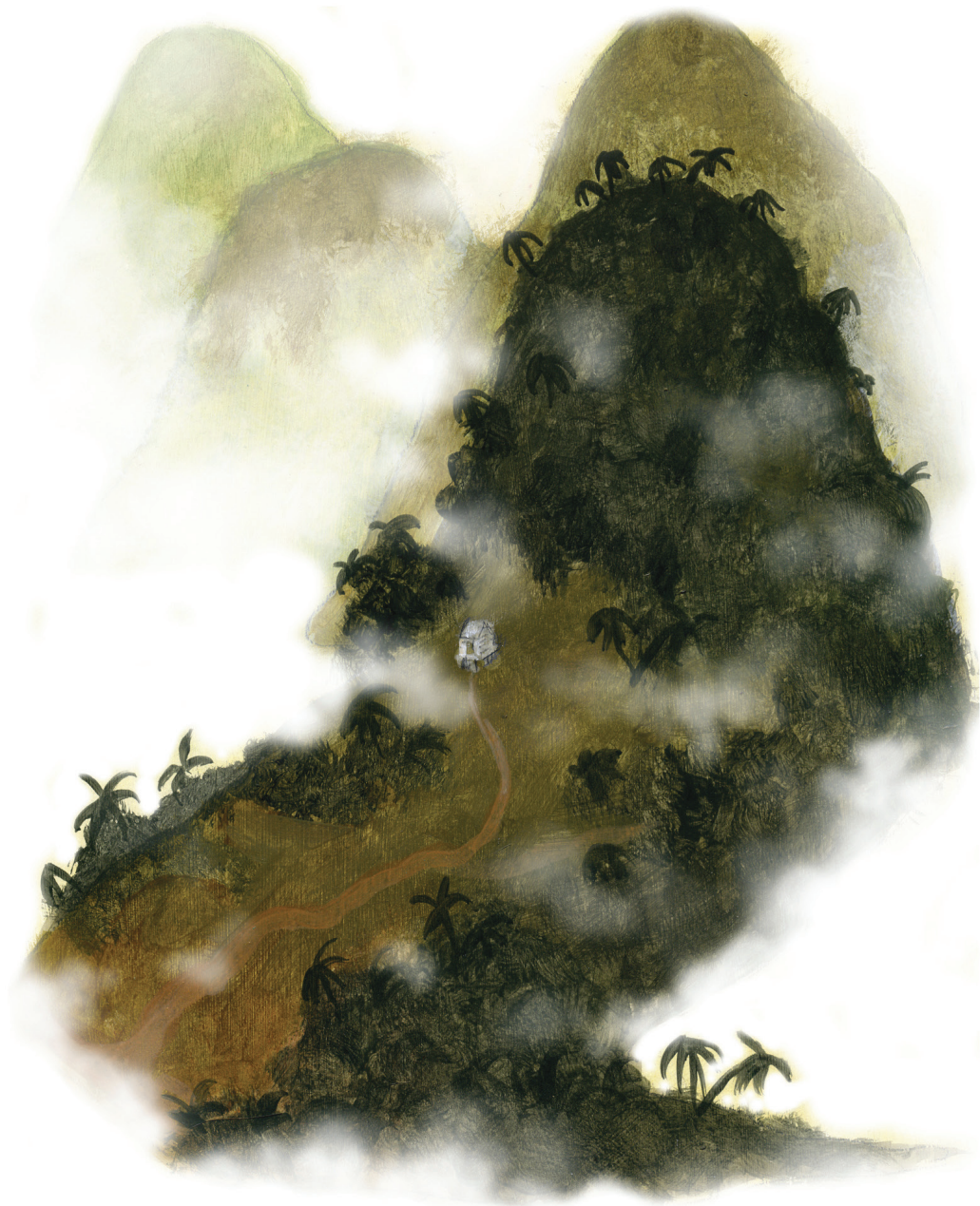
I'd like to thank Renee Ofori, Rachel Wacker, Saymoukda Vongsay, Chay Douangphouxay, and everyone involved in the Reading Together Project for their patience and encouragement.

~ Alex Kuno ~



Long, long ago in the magical kingdom of Laos,
where the golden sun rose high up in the eastern sky
and emerald mountains dotted the land...

...there lived three sisters.



The eldest of the three was named Din,
which in Lao means “earth.” This name was given
to her so she would remember to walk in humility.



The second sister was named Nom,
which in Lao means “water.” This name was given
to her so that she might be as calm as the sea.



The youngest, Tawan, was named after the sun,
so that her warmth and kindness could shine
on others.





In this land there also lived a royal prince named Jaiboun. His name, which in Lao means “compassion,” was given to him so that he would remember to rule with kindness.

But Jaiboun did not live up to his name.






He was not kind,
and so he was cursed by the people and



turned into a wretched dog,
relying on the compassion of others.

One cold and misty night, a hungry dog
crept out of the shadows and whimpered
in front of the sisters' house.



An illustration of a woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a dark dress with white floral patterns. She is leaning forward, peering out from a doorway into a dark night. Her right hand is raised, pointing towards a light source. In the foreground, a light-colored dog with dark fur around its eyes and ears is lying down, looking up at her. The background is a bright yellow glow, suggesting a light source like a moon or a fire. The overall style is painterly and expressive.

Hearing the dog's cry,
Din opened the door and
peered out into the night.

She saw only a filthy animal begging for scraps.
She shooed the beast away and slammed
the door.

Again the dog whimpered and scratched at the door, this time interrupting Nom while she was eating her rice porridge dinner.





Furious, Nom threw open the door to see a dog begging for food. “*Mah bah* (stupid dog)!” she screamed, and without delay dumped what was left of the porridge on the poor dog’s head.



In desperation, the dog let out a final moan.

The door opened again. It was Tawan.
“*Bpen tah eeh thoan dae* (my poor little dear!)”
cried Tawan. “You must be so hungry and tired!”





Pulling a piece
of dried meat
from her pocket,
she fed the dog
and wiped the
porridge
off of his head.

She then lifted him
gently and carried
him into the house.



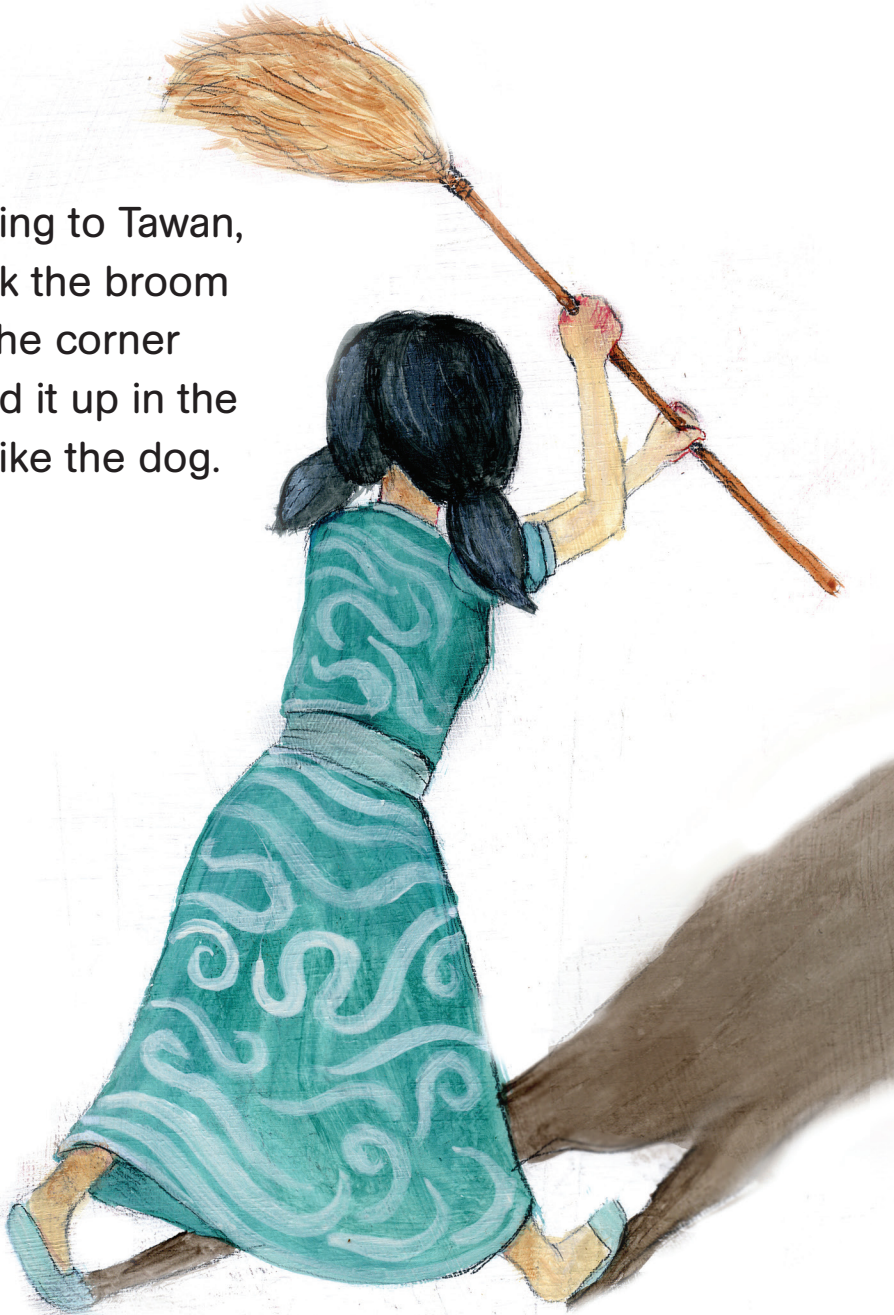
Seeing the dog,
Din demanded that he be thrown out.
Then Nom entered the room and saw the dog
in Tawan's arms. She was angry.
"Get that dog out of here!" she yelled.



“Please,
please let him
stay awhile,”
pleaded Tawan.
“It is so cold and
dark outside, and
he has nowhere
to go.”



Not listening to Tawan,
Nom took the broom
from the corner
and raised it up in the
air to strike the dog.





“No!” Tawan cried,
lifting her arm to protect the
dog from Nom’s broom.

Suddenly, in a burst of light,
the dog returned to his natural form.



Tawan's kind heart had broken the curse!
To the sisters' surprise, in front of them
was not a dog, but His Royal Highness,
Prince Jaiboun.



Immediately they bowed
before him.

The prince said softly, "Thank you, Tawan.
Your kindness has broken the curse.
By showing kindness even to a filthy dog,
you have shown me how to be a better man.
Will you stand by my side as my queen
and help me to rule the country?"
Tawan graciously accepted the prince's proposal.





Ashamed of their actions,
Tawan's older sisters apologized and vowed to
care for others by following Tawan's example.

Tawan and Prince Jaiboun were married, and



together they ruled the kingdom with kindness
and love.



ARTISTS' BIOS:

Chay Douangphouxay is an award-winning Lao-Khmer American artist/activist from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Ms. Douangphouxay uses her art to educate and inspire others to advocate for their communities. Her first solo chapbook, *Remission: Finding Light in the Midst of Social Darkness*, was released as part of the 2012 Legacy Fellowship Grant and has been widely utilized as a national educational tool on issues of class, gender, and race. Chay is the co-founder and co-chair of the Twin Cities chapter of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF), an organization working to forge a grassroots progressive movement to advance social justice and human rights for Asian-Pacific Islander (API) women and girls. In addition, she serves as a board member of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), a national organization that advances the interests of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans by empowering communities through advocacy, leadership development, and capacity building to create a socially just and equitable society.

Alex Kuno is a professional artist and illustrator living and working in Lowertown, St. Paul. *The Miscreants of Tiny Town*—his ongoing painting series of improvised, darkly satirical fairy tales and morality plays—has been featured in numerous solo and group shows in museums and major galleries throughout the Twin Cities and around the country. Kuno's work is currently represented by Curly Tale Fine Art in Chicago, and he can be seen on tpt's *MN Original*.