

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

I feel a rush of wind and I touch my pearl earrings.  
Grandma Nội, is that you?

Spontaneous and energetic Liz, the middle Nguyen sibling, is determined to prove she is just as important and brave as the fierce Trung Sisters, freedom fighters in ancient Vietnam. So when the new boy at school threatens her plans, Liz sets out to show him just what she's capable of.

The only problem is, first she has to figure out the mysterious power her pearl earrings seem to hold and what Grandma Nội is trying to tell her!



Coming soon: Book 3



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THE NGUYEN KIDS The Power of the PEARL EARRINGS

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THE  
NGUYEN KIDS

# The Power of the PEARL EARRINGS

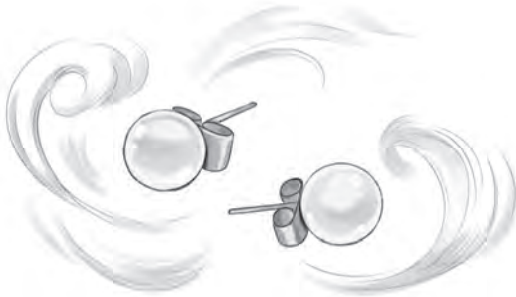


written by  
Linda Trinh  
illustrated by  
Clayton Nguyen



THE  
**NGUYEN KIDS**

*The Power of the*  
**PEARL EARRINGS**



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 **annick  
press**  
toronto • berkeley

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For Ryan, our stories are forever intertwined.

—L.T.

For Maddy.

—C.N.



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## CHAPTER 1

# I'm the Leader!

“Now what, Liz?” Rohan, Best Friend Ever, asks me. He grabs a handful of ketchup chips.

I shrug. We're hanging out in my living room. It's the Sunday before school starts and it's raining. It's so boring being trapped inside.

“Let's play Trung Warriors!” I stand up quickly. “To practice for our first Taekwondo class.”

“Okay!” Rohan says as he leaps onto the couch.

“You were Trưng Trắc last time. I’m the leader!”

I move to stand in front of him. “I’m at the front of the elephant. You’re my sister, Trưng Nhi.”

My Grandma Nội used to babysit me and Rohan. My grandma used to tell us the story of Hai Bà Trưng, two brave sisters who lived a long time ago. They were warriors, great fighters, and fought for freedom. They were Vietnamese like I am.

“The invaders are coming!” I shout and pull out my imaginary sword.

Rohan pulls out his imaginary sword too. We jump from our elephant to fight the bad guys.

I get my short hair stuck on one of my pearl





earrings when I do a spin kick move. The pearl earrings were a gift from Grandma Nội. My sister got our grandma's jade bangle. And my brother got her painted fan. My gift is the coolest.

I look over at Grandma Nội's picture on her altar in our dining room. She died over a year ago now. Dad and Mom say we Vietnamese believe the spirits of our family, our ancestors, stay with us after they pass away. They hear our prayers. They watch out for us. I hope she's happy I'm wearing her earrings.

“The other fighters are too strong! To the river,” Rohan says, just like we've played so many times. He runs to the window.

I jab and duck and fight my way over to him.

We are back-to-back as we swing our invisible swords around. I throw cushions and pillows everywhere.

Me and Rohan lie on the floor after the battle.

That's how my older sister, Miss Perfect, Anne, finds me. Dad and Mom are always busy with her and my younger brother, The Baby, Jacob. I get lost in the middle most of the time.



Dad always said it's Anne's job as the oldest sister to look after us. She's only two years older than me. I'm eight, but she thinks she's the boss of me.

"Hey, we have to practice," Anne says.

My boring sister and her boring ballet friends, Sophie and Jennifer, want to wreck my fun, again.

"We were here first. Basement?" I reply.

"The floor here is better. You go to the basement!" she says.

"Mom!" we yell at the same time.

Mom comes in from the kitchen. "Liz, Rohan, please! The girls have a performance." She gives me that look—*don't make trouble*.

"My mom always sides with Anne," I say as

Rohan and I head down the basement stairs. I stomp my feet.

“At least she let you quit ballet,” Rohan replies.

It’s true. Before Anne changed ballet schools, Mom would never have let me. Now she asks questions about how I’m feeling and if things bother me. But there’s one thing that hasn’t changed. She still sides with my sister!

Rohan punches in the air. “And now we’ll both be in Mrs. Goodman’s grade three class and take Taekwondo together!”

I nod, happy again. “We can be like the Trung Warriors for real!” I say, kicking into the air.

## CHAPTER 2

# Golden Boy

“I like your earrings,” my friend Lucy says to me a few days later on the first day of school.

I smile as I sit at the desk beside her. “Thanks, I like your shoes!”

I look around. New classroom! New teacher! I can’t wait! I touch my earrings and feel a rush of

wind. I can almost hear Grandma Nôi's laughter through them. Weird!

Rohan sits at the desk on my other side. Gershom is in front of me. And Aiden is behind me. It's so awesome to be surrounded by friends.

Our teacher, Mrs. Goodman, stands at the front. "Welcome, everyone, to grade three. Before we do attendance, in our class, we have two students new to our school. Welcome, Rosa. Rosa's family just came to Winnipeg from the Philippines."

Rosa stands up but looks down at the floor.

I like the color of her shirt. It's pink like Auntie Hai's roses.

“And welcome, Michael,” Mrs. Goodman continues.

A boy at the back stands up and waves.

Michael reminds me of the Golden Boy statue that is at the very top of an important building downtown. Shiny and cool.

“Hey! We moved from Victoria. I need a parka soon, right? Like next month?” he says.

I giggle along with some other girls. Some of the boys wave to him.

They both seem cool. Can't wait for recess to make even more friends!





Miss Perfect, our cousin Hao, and Jennifer, all in grade five, come over to say hi at morning recess. I say hey quickly and pull Rohan away. I want my own friend group and not to be Anne's tag-along sister.

I check on Jacob hanging out at the grade two doors. He's one year younger than me, seven years old. I can't help looking out for him, even though he's the baby of the family and gets everything he wants. He runs in circles with his hockey friends, Nam and Kayden. He's okay so I turn back to my friends.

Rohan and I stand in the field with Aiden, Gershom, Lucas, Madiha, and Lucy. Some other friends come over. Rohan and I start punching and kicking the air.



I wave Rosa to come over. I want her to be my friend.

“That’s my fave kind of pink,” I say to her.

She doesn’t say anything.

I point at her pink shirt and my pink bracelet and do a thumbs-up. She smiles. And I smile even more.

Michael comes over to join us. “What’s up?”

He doesn’t look like the new kid. He’s smiling at everyone and looking relaxed. If this was my first day at a new school, I’d so want to throw up.

“Practicing our moves,” I say.

“Liz has the best moves,” Aiden says.

“Gershom, you pretend to fall when I come at you,” I say and step toward him.

“Way to go, Liz,” Lucy says.

“Cool moves,” says Michael, looking only at Rohan and not at me.

“Liz and I are starting Taekwondo together,” Rohan says, as he spins around and kicks.

“That’s cool, Rohan.” Then he turns to me and shakes his head. “But Liz, really?” He turns to the crowd. “Taekwondo— isn’t that a boy thing?”



Kids stop. And then some begin to laugh.

That is so weird to say. “No! Girls can do anything!” I say but my voice shakes.

Michael doesn't back down. He says more loudly and with a steady voice, "But girls aren't into things like that."

But *I'm* into this stuff. I love the Trung Warriors and they were women and they fought for freedom.

Lucas and Aiden laugh again. Rohan looks down and doesn't say anything. Gershom and Lucy walk away.

"Boys like that stuff," Michael says like he wants to bug me or something.

I drop my hands and my cheeks feel flushed. I don't say anything. Am I the strange one? For once, I'm not so excited to be the center of attention.

