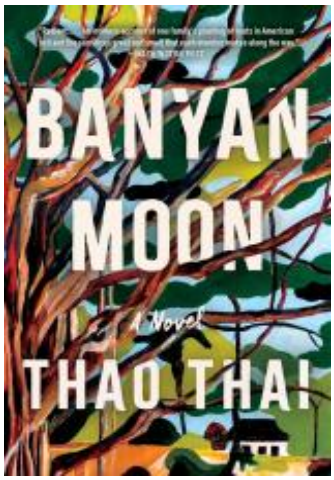
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Banyan Moon

by Thao Thai



About the Book

A sweeping, evocative debut novel following three generations of Vietnamese American women reeling from the death of their matriarch, revealing the family?s inherited burdens, buried secrets and unlikely love stories.

When Ann Tran gets the call that her fiercely beloved grandmother, Minh, has passed away, her life is already at a crossroads. In the years since she?s last seen Minh, Ann has built a seemingly perfect life --- a beautiful lake house, a charming professor boyfriend, and invites to elegant parties that bubble over with champagne and good taste --- but it all crumbles with one positive pregnancy test. With both her relationship and carefully planned future now in question, Ann returns home to Florida to face her estranged mother, Hu?ng.

Back in Florida, Hu?ng is simultaneously mourning her mother and resenting her for having the relationship with Ann that she never did. Then Ann and Hu?ng learn that Minh has left them both the Banyan House, the crumbling old manor that was Ann?s childhood home, in all its strange, Gothic glory. Under the same roof for the first time in years, mother and daughter must face the simmering questions of their past and their uncertain futures, while trying to rebuild their relationship without the one person who?s always held them together.

Running parallel to this is Minh?s story, as she goes from a lovestruck teenager living in the shadow of the Vietnam War to a determined young mother immigrating to America in search of a better life for her children. And when Ann makes a shocking discovery in the Banyan House?s attic, long-buried secrets come to light as it becomes clear how decisions Minh made in her youth affected the rest of her life --- and beyond.

Spanning decades and continents, from 1960s Vietnam to the wild swamplands of the Florida coast, BANYAN MOON is a stunning and deeply moving story of mothers and daughters, the things we inherit, and the lives we choose to make out of that inheritance.

Discussion Guide

1. The story of Chú Cu?i has been passed down through the Tran family and holds special significance to them. How does this legend relate to the Tran women, and why does it resonate with them so deeply? Are there any folk tales or stories that were passed down through your family?

2. How do Minh, H??ng and Ann each show their love for their family members? How do their ways of showing love differ, and how are they similar?

3. Of the three Tran women, was there one you related to most?

4. When Ann returns home, she rebuilds her relationships with Wes and Crystal. How have their relationships changed over the years, and in what ways do they fall back into similar patterns? Have you had a similar experience with your high school or childhood friends?

5. Because the story is told through the perspectives of all three women, we often see moments through different peoples? eyes and also get each of their perspectives on their relationships. How did this affect your view of the characters?

6. Why do you think Ann chooses not to tell H??ng the secret that she discovers about her parentage? Do you think she should have told her? Does H??ng deserve to know?

7. Through conversations with H??ng and particularly Crystal, Ann starts to realize that perhaps her beloved Minh wasn?t always as perfect as she thought. How does this shatter her worldview? Have you ever had a similar moment with someone you revered as a child?

8. In what ways does Minh?s experience growing up during the Vietnam War affect her? How does the legacy of war hang over her throughout her life?

9. Did you feel sympathy for Ph??c? To what extent do you understand his actions and motivations? Do you think he burned down the house intentionally?

10. Compare the three women?s relationships with the men in their lives. What similarities do you see between their respective romantic relationships? What, if anything, do you think each woman learned from watching their parents? relationship?

11. How, if at all, does becoming a mother help Ann see her own mother differently?

12. Why do you think the Banyan House had such a pull on the Tran women? Do you think the house needed to burn down in order for them to feel free to start over? Do you have a similar relationship with your home?

13. There?s a hint of magic to the Banyan House --- Ann feels Minh?s presence after her death, and we the readers also see Minh continuing to watch over the house and her family. To what extent do you think there?s some kind of true magic here, and to what extent do you think it?s a manifestation of Ann?s love and grief for her grandmother?

14. What were your thoughts on the ending? Were you happy with where each character ended up? What do you think the future holds for them?

Author Bio

Thao Thai is the author of BANYAN MOON, the July 2023 "Read with Jenna" title, Barnes & Noble Discover Pick, and Book of the Month selection. BANYAN MOON was also selected by booksellers as an Indie Next pick and longlisted for the Center for Fiction's First Novel Prize. A recipient of the 2024 Ohio Arts Council?s Individual Excellence Award, her work has been published in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *WIRED*, *Elle*, *Lit Hub* and other publications. She lives in central Ohio with her husband and daughter. Her latest novel is THE SEEKERS OF DEER CREEK.

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