



A Woman Who 'Opened the Door'

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Author Isabelle Müller, whose father is French and mother is Vietnamese and currently lives in Germany, used the first person "I" when writing about her mother's life.

"If the world out there no longer wants to listen to us, let us build a world of our own and pray that no one can destroy it." This is also a way to open another door when the world we face is gray and unclear in the future. That is the theme throughout the book (original Loan - Aus dem Leben eines Phönix), translated by Truong Hong Quang, published by Tre Publishing House.



Author and Ms. Truong My Hoa

Author Isabelle Müller, whose father is French and mother is Vietnamese, currently living in Germany, has transformed into the first person, using the pronoun "I" when writing about her mother's life. Her real name is Dau Thi Cuc, born in 1929, in the village of Ha Tinh. After her first child, Loan, passed away, she took her child's name as an implication "so that the phoenix can continue to live". Isabelle Müller and Loan are half-sisters. Isabelle writes out of admiration: "Mother is the embodiment that has been burned many times and each time rises from the ashes".

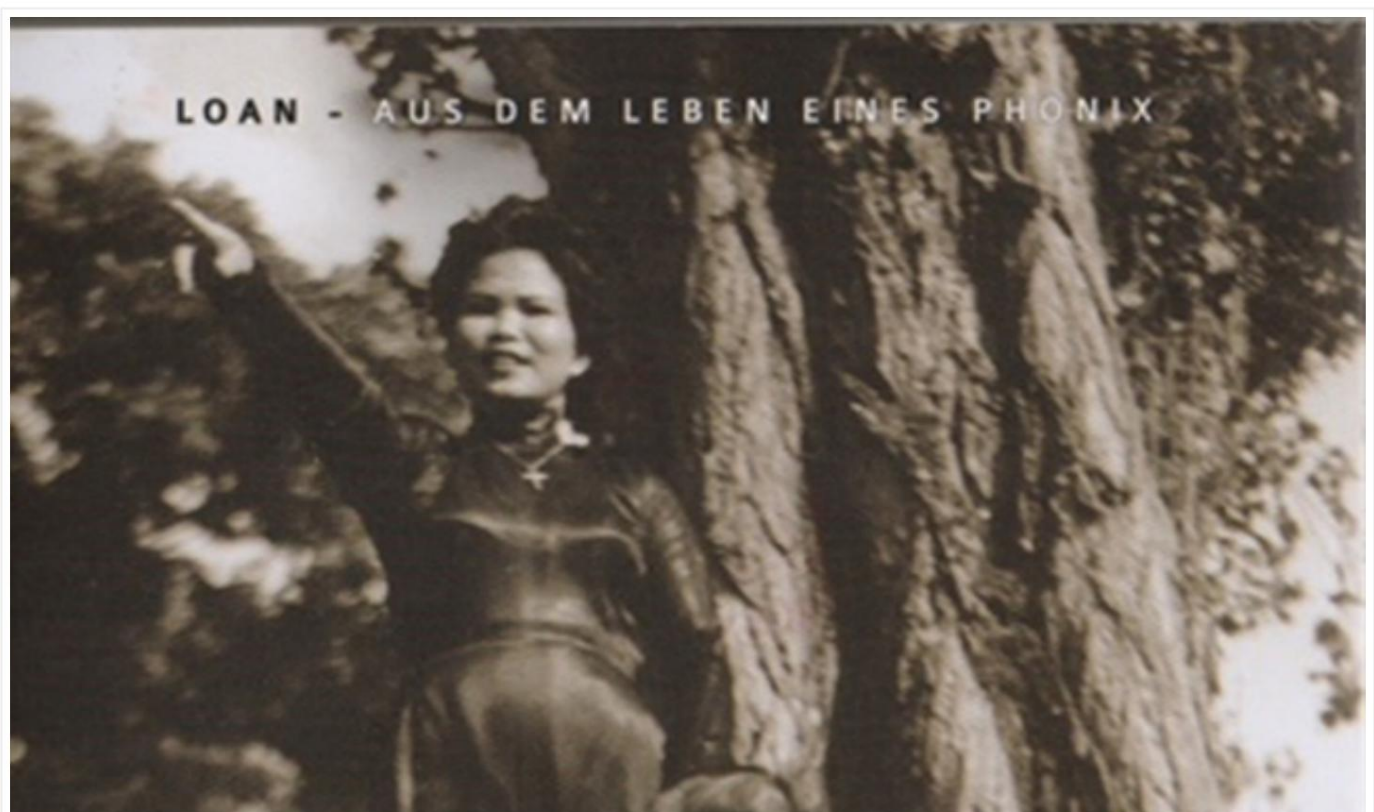
Author Isabelle Müller:

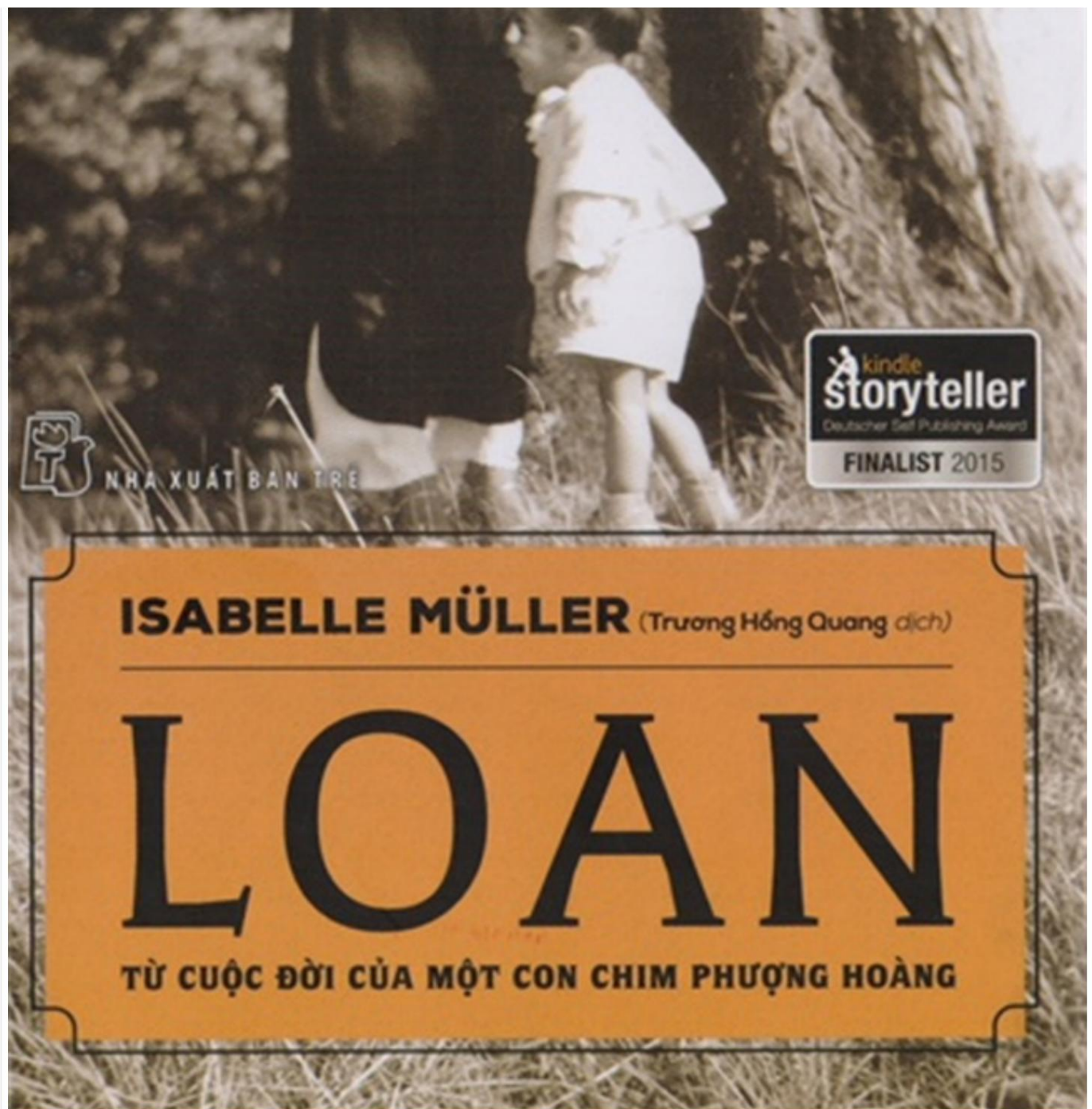
By rewriting my mother's story and having Tre Publishing House publish the book in Vietnam, I was able to bring my mother back to her homeland, back to her home. Many details in this book are very meaningful to me. When she had an accident and became disabled, she did not want to live anymore, but a friend advised her "not to die" because: "You must continue to live so that one day you can tell the world the story of your life". My mother did that.

Due to the backward concept of that time, Mrs. Loan was not allowed to go to school. One time, when her brother went to school, Loan curiously took out his notebook and opened it to read, but unexpectedly, her brother caught her: "He dragged me out from under the table. Holding my father's bamboo stick in his hand, he beat me like crazy and when I fell to my knees under the blows, he used both legs to kick me, first in the stomach, then in the ribs, back and finally in the face. I did not try to run away and remained motionless, hoping that his madness would pass quickly. But he did not stop, and eventually I lost consciousness."

Afraid of having to marry at the age of 12 so that her father could receive the rice field, Loan ran away. Later, missing her mother and younger brother, she returned home: "Without saying a word, he punched me straight in the face, the punch was so strong that I fell to the ground. Like my father had done before, my eldest brother tied my hair to the bedpost, ripped the thin shirt off my back before going to get the bamboo stick. Then he beat me until I bled."

She did not say what his name was. Neither did her aunt, who had lived in the same house as her on her journey to make a living. One fine day, the aunt "gave me a beautiful short-sleeved red velvet dress and a pair of silver shoes. I had never been dressed so beautifully." That was the day the aunt took her 13-year-old niece to... sell her to a brothel.





Strange fate, a few decades later, in Saigon, October 1955, when Loan went to France to settle down with her husband - a trip that many people at that time envied and longed for - she met that aunt again. "What was God's intention? Why was this cruel woman the witness to my departure? Or was it a punishment for her to see me on this ship, leaving for freedom, while she had to stay here? I never found the answer."

There are some things that, if not the person involved, perhaps when told, no one would believe. While she was bewildered in the brothel waiting for her aunt to come in to negotiate, Loan was urged by other girls in the same situation to run away, and Loan did so. Another time, the landlord ordered her to make coffee, while "Machine gun bullets rained down on our roof. With the thought that I would die on the spot, I ran down to the kitchen, amidst the deadly bullets flying all around." Despite her fear, Loan had to follow orders. When Loan picked up the cup of coffee, the landlord was shot and killed.

Loan's exciting life has gone through many events from the northern provinces to Saigon. There were times when she faced disaster, even imprisonment, near death, and seemed to collapse, but she still had to stand up. "What motivated me? Hope. Hope for the driven, the abandoned, the lonely and the

a man of faith. I hope to leave a legacy of experience for my children on their journey through life: that we will build a better world than the one I knew; that we will achieve what I did not have.”

When reading Loan - From the life of a phoenix, I remember the verses of Diep Minh Tuyen: "The afternoon cemetery is like a vast library/ Each grave is as thick as a novel.../ Try so that when we end/ Each life is a good book". Yes, Loan is a good book. And the Loan fund, established by Ms. Isabelle Müller in 2016, specializes in supporting ethnic minority children in the North of Vietnam.

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Ms. Truong My Hoa (former President of Vietnam Women's Union):

Loan - an ordinary woman who has done many extraordinary things. When attending the program "Step Through the Door" produced by the Ho Chi Minh City Women's Union, Ho Chi Minh City Women's Newspaper and HTV, I thought that Loan was also one of the typical women who had stepped through the door, had overcome themselves in a fierce, unequal battle. In the end, with their determination, they achieved what they dreamed of, desired in a better world.

Le Minh Quoc
