

Driven from Home-Part One

Kham closed his eyes as the pastor prayed.

“God, thank You for this rice and not forgetting our exile. Be with us and bring us joy in the things that bring You joy. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.”

Kham looked at the smiling faces, ready to enjoy the first good meal they had eaten in over a week. But he didn’t feel joy. He was worried about his sister, Bua. She had not been feeling well, and she needed good food, more than just once. And she needed clean water.

As soon as the meal was over, he grabbed his friend Vieng’s arm.

“Vieng, we have to do something. Bua is getting worse.”

“We can go to my uncle’s barn. We’ll get some tools and dig a well. The clean water should help some.”

“If we get caught—”

“My uncle and his family wouldn’t turn us in. They left the rice for us to find.”

“We’ve been starving for weeks! And we don’t know for sure who left the rice!”

“My family doesn’t hate us for believing in Jesus. They’re just afraid of the other villagers.”

Kham sighed. “I’m glad some people in our families believe in Jesus.”

“We’ll leave for the barn first thing in the morning.”

Morning could not come soon enough.

As soon as the sun began to shine above the trees, they set out on the four-mile hike to the small village nestled deep in the jungle of Laos. Overhead, a parakeet called to her children. The last time Kham had walked this path, the shouts of the angry mob had drowned all songs. One morning, the villagers had forced everyone out of church and forbid them to ever return to their homes or the village. Sometimes, Kham didn’t mind living in the shelter his family had built. It kept out the animals and most of the rain. But every day that passed, they had less to eat.

Then yesterday, someone had left them rice. He thought his sister would finally have something good to eat. But when Kham had peered into the cooking pot, the dirty water he saw

made his stomach sick. And it was not only dirty, but crowded. Crowded with bits of plants and crawling with bugs. How could anything cooked in that make Bua feel better?

“Vieng, wait!”

Kham stopped his friend just before he stepped out of the bushes. A heap of boards and pieces of a grass roof lay right in front of them, right where Vieng’s home used to stand.