

Cast Away

JACQUE LY COULD SELL HER FAMILY'S STORY TO HOLLYWOOD.

When 23-year-old Jacqueline Ly (LC'01) sits in class at the Labor Education Building on the Douglass campus, her mind sometimes flashes back to 1989 when she and her three older brothers fled Cambodia and drifted in the Pacific Ocean for four days. With no food or water left, they wondered if they would ever see another living soul. "It was a miracle that the Thai coast guard spotted us," says Ly, who was nine years old at the time. "We didn't speak Thai. They took us ashore and fed us, but took all our money and jewelry."

After three years in two Thai refugee camps, where Ly witnessed beatings and was often forced out into the cold in the middle of the night, she learned that her parents and other siblings had escaped by boat to Malaysia. Her father, who had been a government official in Vietnam and was helpful to the U.S. military, was able to gain political asylum for the family in the U.S. Ly and her three



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brothers arrived in 1989; the rest of the family followed a year later. "When I saw my parents at Newark airport, I was so numb that I was unable to speak," says Ly. "It was only through photos that I

remembered them." The Ly family now lives in Jersey City, where they own a liquor store, and her father publishes a magazine on Vietnamese

culture. These days Ly has a more modest goal than survival: to land a position in Rutgers' human resources department once she completes graduate studies in labor and employment relations.