

*Charles Hayes*  
**Nuoc Mam**

**G**athering darkness fades the Great Smoky Mountain peaks into hazy humps that most evenings bring me a semblance of peace. But tonight their magic is gone. Sitting at a small table near the window that faces them, I study the faded photo of the young Vietnamese woman holding her baby. Silently I ask myself the same old questions: Did she wait for him and cry when she knew he wasn't coming back, was she waiting for the money that I took from his wallet, along with this photo, after I shot him? These questions have played in my mind for forty years and all I can do is imagine the answers. And no answer, however imagined, makes me feel any better. Tossing the photo atop the dong currency scattered on the table, I rue the day that I took these things: War souvenirs that have branded my mind like the boogie men of children's dreams. But unlike a child, I can not outgrow them.

"Ben, are you fretting over that war stuff again?" Jean calls from the kitchen. "Please put those things back in the box until I can help you deal with it. We'll figure something out."

Having lost her husband to Agent Orange related cancer, Jean was a widow when I asked her to marry me twenty five years ago. I had no real hard assets to bring to the union. Just a good eye for wood and how to use it. She had a small farm with ample shop space that her husband had left her near the North Carolina mountains. Both of us came from that rural area close to Asheville and the plentiful hardwoods of the Appalachians. So we made a go of it with a few beef and a small cabinet business that I developed. Going through the after effects of the Vietnam war and its Agent Orange defoliate had given Jean a crash course in consequences. Watching her husband die had left her changed in a way that increased her understanding of people like me. She firmed me for my later years by giving me a lot of insight into my problems. Moreover, it was a good union and we both gained the partnership, strength, and love of another caring and respectful person. Now, amidst the prep smells of a turf and surf dinner, her specialty, she lets me know that she will have a hand in finding a way to let the war souvenirs go. And I welcome it.

Not feeling very hungry, although the aroma of stir fried shrimp and beef strips mixed with garlic and onions is nice, I put the souvenirs back in their shoebox and enter the kitchen.

"Hey babe, that smells nice. You sure know how to brighten a home with the smells of good cooking."

"Thank you Ben," Jean replies. "It helps when you've got someone who notices. Now, sit down. I'll cover this stir fry and let the leather britches simmer a bit more while we talk. It's long past time to get a handle on your old ghosts. Just letting them stew is not good....for either of us."

Taking a seat at the small breakfast table where we have some of our best conversations, I try to relax with the hope that Jean will steer this sit down. It's hard for me to know where to begin with emotional stuff but Jean has a knack for it. She is smarter than me as well and can see avenues

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of resolution where I see only alleyways. After checking the stove one more time she places a cup of tea in front of me and sits down with her own. Stirring her tea, she takes a deep breath and looks out the window into the darkness.

"I wish it were daytime," she says. "I enjoy watching the Angus graze from here in my kitchen, all high and dry. They are such beautiful black beefs. Hardy animals."

I nod and smile as Jean takes a sip of tea before continuing.

"You know, that old bull hasn't let down yet either. Sometimes, sitting here drinking my tea, I can mark the calendar for a new beef by watching that randy old critter. Even when the weather is bad. He may slip a bit on the mount but he still gets the job done. It's the way things are. But our work helps keep them that way, the haying, calving, the money from your cabinets to fix the equipment and buy new when it's needed.....don't you think, honey?"

So keen, my Jean, it's just like her to point out the blessings before broaching darker subjects.

"Yeah babe, you got it right, no doubt," I answer.

Feeling a little above the boogie men of war because there was a time for her when no amount of good things could take the edge off what was, Jean pushes a little.

"So Ben, don't you think we can do something to bring that kind of balance into your past? Make it what it is, the past?"

"It's just that I did a bad thing," I say. "Mostly because I was stupid. But that doesn't make it OK. What was in the pockets of the dead was none of my business ... even if I didn't intend to steal it. Because that is what I did. I stole from the dead. Souvenirs, my ass, it was loot. I was just too stupid to know it then."

Having heard me well, Jean nods and places her hand on mine but inside she is unmoved.

"So what is the first thing you must do if you have stolen something, Ben?"

It is hard for me not to blurt out the obvious answer, but the gravity of it deserves a little time to just hang there and get thoroughly digested. After a moment, feeling like the wheels have already been set in motion, and having thought of the same answer many times, there is only one reply.

"Will you go with me?"

After looking at me like I am a child too old to wet my pants, but have done so anyway, Jean replies, "Of Course."



When I open my eyes the first thing I see is Jean peering down at me. A shiver tells me that my wet T-shirt ought to come off, which Jean helps me do. Then, leaving the lights off, as per past experiences, she gets a fresh one from the bureau and helps me struggle into it before tucking the covers to fight my chill. A shaft of moonlight, its purity marred by little float-

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ing dust particles, filters through the sheer window curtains. It provides enough light to clearly see the concerned expression on her face. Struggling to calm the adrenaline that has my senses too keen for an old man, I start taking deep breaths and rattling on about anything: the weather, how much hay we have, anything to try and cut into what is really happening and deflate it some. Jean just nods and calmly gives an occasional, "I know."

Five minutes of this unwinds the situation enough to allow some relief in. Along with the relief, though, comes the inevitable shame. Not to mention the big disappointment. I had hoped that I had kicked the bad dreams since it had been a while without them. Hoped that our planned action had put them to rest. At least for a little longer than this. With these thoughts come the realization that the planned trip back to the war zone, win or lose, can not come too soon. We are too old for this. And this knowledge is scary in it's own right. We do not think nor discuss failure. We try to pretend there is no fear.

After a minute of stroking my brow, Jean asks, "Was it the man or the woman?"

Back to half normal now, but flooded with the embarrassment and shame of another episode, I would like to just poo poo it all, pat Jean's cheek, and tell her not to fret about it. But I know better than to even try.

"Both," I answer.

Jean nods and continues.

"Near Hoi An?"

I can see it all in my mind's eye but with Jean leading it is different than in the dream. With Jean, I only see it. I don't relive it. Having learned to trust her instincts I deliver up whatever she wants to know.

"Yeah babe, in the mud by the river where he fell. She was a little ways off on a paddy dike.....just watching."

Feeling that it is important for her to learn more about what happened, Jean cautiously goes on and tries to avoid any pressure.

"OK, honey," Jean says. "You didn't see her when it really happened, did you?"

"No of course not, I didn't ...."

With a familiar flat expression, Jean lets my words hang a moment, nods, then slowly leaves the bed, softly humming an unknown tune. Putting on her robe, she looks over at me and smiles.

"I'll put some coffee on and cook something light for an early breakfast. Come down when you are ready. And don't worry Ben, you're going to return everything that is heavenly possible."



Approaching Da Nang, Vietnam after stops in Chicago and Seoul, Jean is sleeping against the bulkhead and I am bone tired after a full day of sitting in flying tubes. But all fatigue vanishes when, feeling the slight decrease in speed and lift, I lean across Jean and look down on the Vietnam

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coast and South China Sea. Clear blue waters running to stretches of white sand and steep verdant mountains signal our entry into Southeast Asia. Amazingly, luxury high rise hotels dot the beaches, and cars by the thousands fill the multilane highways. Off the left wing, rising up high enough to distinguish the Asian hardwoods of its slopes, is Nui Son Tra, what we called Monkey Mountain. It dominates the whole area of the coast, providing observation north to Hai Van Pass and south to Da Nang. Seeing this beacon for land and sea, I recall the last time I passed over it. How we suddenly dived and landed hard to avoid fire. And how I had to check my pants afterward. How, surreally, a colorfully dressed stewardess, like some sort of French canary amid a bunch of olive drab crows, appeared at the front of the cabin, and welcomed us to the busiest airport in the world. And the phantom jets, coming in quickly, and going out, afterburners blasting.

Feeling Jean's tug on my upper arm as the flaps lower and we line up for touchdown, I come back to the here and now.

"The gentleman across the aisle is speaking to you," she says.

Looking over, I see a smiling silver haired Vietnamese man with thick horned rim glasses staring at me. In good accented English he repeats his question.

"How does it feel to be back?"

Wondering how he knows that, I reply.

"A little unreal, except for the mountain. How do you know I am coming back?"

Gently smiling, his face is kind and gracious.

"You are obviously American and I read your expressions as you looked at Nui Son Tra, your Monkey Mountain. All Americans who were here remember it well. We still use some of your radar there, you know?"

Noticing that we are about the same age, and his knack for putting me at ease, I find his friendly curiosity pleasant.

"Yes," I say, "from up there the view is one of the best that I have ever seen. I wonder if there are still the crash sites of American jets trying to make it back to Da Nang up there."

His face lights up with a broad smile at my knowledge but he courteously tones it down a bit when he says, "Oh yes, they are respectful memorials, to be sure. A bit rusty and scavenged by now but, on occasion, important teaching tools for our young."

"You must be from the Da Nang area to have such a thorough knowledge of the area," I say.

Appearing to pause for his own reflections, the gentleman looks to the cabin ceiling, then at me with a more subdued expression.

"Yes, all my life ... I fought at the other famous mountain here, your Marble Mountain, with parts of the 5th Viet Cong regiment."

He seems to recognize my astonishment as he pauses and smiles boldly at me. Having given me time to digest the fact that he was once my

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enemy he pulls his trouser leg up and knocks on the plastic prosthesis.

“That is where I got this. Our field hospital, thankfully never discovered, took good care of me there. When I recovered I worked there until the war ended. A long long time ago. But it’s funny how it brings us back sometimes, isn’t it?”

Humbled by having come through only a single year of the war, a war that for him was for as long as it lasted, I can think of no reply as we come in on final approach. I look around to Jean who smiles and says, “Very nice man.”

Turning back to the gentleman across the aisle, I see his hand stretched toward me and I firmly grip it. Sincerely, as our eyes search each other’s, he says, “Welcome to Vietnam, my friend. We are glad to have you back and hope that your visit will nurture the common good everywhere you go.”

With unexpected emotion, I reply.

“Thank you.”

As the wheels screech and the reverse thrusters send us forward, we all look ahead.



The glass, steel, and concrete structure of the Da Nang International Airport, like the luxury high rise hotels on the beach, is another shock for me. Looking back at the front of the arrivals terminal before getting into the taxi behind Jean, I find it so different from the expanses of black tarmac, Quonset huts, and large aluminum hangers that used to be here. A cool, modern work where there had been only undulating heat and noise, the airport brings me none of the recall that I had expected. Looking to the heights of the terminal, I discover another difference not so surprising. On a large pole canted out over the entrance flies no stars and stripes. Nor the yellow and stripes of South Vietnam. Only a large yellow star over a blood red background gently ripples in the breeze.

After giving the taxi driver the hotel address, Jean and I tiredly lean back and gaze out the window at the passing streets and avenues of a fully maturing Da Nang. Some of the old French structures remain but the thrown together corrugated tin shacks of the war years are gone. Not such a big deal by international standards, the city is still quite unlike what it was when I was last here. And the people have no recognition of Jean and me as anything other than another pair of foreigners going about our business in the heavily congested and growing city. Eye contacts seem fleeting and of no consequence. Not like some of the hard dark stares of the war. But everything is not so different. Exiting the taxi at our hotel, I get a good whiff of the unmistakable smell of nuoc mam or fermented fish sauce, and for the first time since getting here I am pulled back to the uncomfortable past. I once hated that smell and its reminder to observe carefully. Yet it was, and still is, one of the primary ingredients of common Vietnamese cooking. I quickly usher Jean into the air conditioned hotel and out of it’s odor.

No less than during the war, but with a higher standard, commerce

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rules here. And the efficient and polite way we are treated and served tells me that as long as we are respectful and have money we will receive the benefits of that commerce. Simply put, we are in the middle of a communist country that functions with a capitalistic agenda. At least here in the city. After checking in and cleaning up Jean orders a large dinner of pho, or noodle soup w/ bits of fish, spring rolls, and a side dish of pork fried rice sent up.

After eating all that we can and putting what is left in the small fridge for later, we sit on the tiny balcony overlooking the avenue below. Watching the ebb and flow of mostly young people to the brightly lit clubs and restaurants passes the evening interestingly enough until, again, the odor of nuoc mam assails my senses. But with a well fed stomach already primed with local cooking and the benefit of relaxation I start to make peace with the odor. It is just too trivial to bother about. Besides, Jean informs me that its smell is just as interesting as it is pungent. And her eyes, looking as heavy as mine feel, tell me that this day in Vietnam, like the French at Dien Bien Phu, *c'est fini*.



Visiting the area around Hoi An gets complicated when the hotel learns of our intent to go along certain parts of the Thu Bon River. Instead of the train followed by a taxi they now insist that I will need a car and driver to make the thirty kilometer trip. And they just happen to have one standing by. More concerned about what will happen when we get there, I go along with the switch and don't give it much thought until our driver arrives wearing what appears to be a government tunic. Giang, in his late forties, politely informs us that he is a representative of the party, which wants to ensure that we have a pleasant visit to the rural area outside of Hoi An. Jean and I look at each other and nod, having already planned on the possibility of being assigned a minder, or one who ensures we don't wander too far afield. Hence, this should not hinder us. In fact we intend to use the added "help" to free us for a more thoughtful navigation of the past. And by every indication so far, it is the past.

Giang is pleasant and able to speak pretty good English during our hour long drive South along the coast. Passing along the outskirts of Hoi An toward the large muddy Thu Bon he points out little things of note and laughs a lot. But when we get close to highway 1 and the more rural area he becomes less jovial and more guarded as my directions take us to a small tributary near the village of Dien Phuong.

Sampan, with small brown men in conical hats steering from their rear perch, ply the waters of the tributary near its confluence with the broad Thu Bon. Much has changed about this place but the rice paddies and stilted huts along this part of the Thu Bon delta have not changed that much. Peasants, their lives rural and self contained, dot the many paddies and dikes along the rivers reach. Bent double, shoving the rice shoots into the water covered mud, they do work that would break the backs of most Americans. And kids still slowly switch their water buffalos along the paddy dikes.

Slowly following the tributary upstream, we come to large double sand spits of shore line reaching almost across the river. And the naked

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feeling I had while crossing them all those years ago suddenly floods my senses. Giang reluctantly stops the car when I ask and we all get out and peer across the first of the two sandy spits. Remaining near the car, as if ready to leave in a heartbeat, Giang watches Jean and me walk a little ways out the first spit.

“Do you know where you are?” Jean asks.

Remembering, like it was yesterday, that the lieutenant had wanted to know why a helicopter gunship was flanking up and down the far shore, I look at Jean.

“Yeah, babe, I know. Over on the other side is where it happened.”

Jean scans the far shoreline for a full minute while I just stare, lost in that time. Taking my hand, Jean finally says, “Come on, we must go there.”

Already knowing this, I lead her out over the spit and toward the far shore as Giang starts yelling for us to stop. When I look back at him he is running around and waving his arms in protest. We ignore his protests and continue anyway.

More than halfway across I stop and stare again.

After a moment Jean says, “What happened here?”

Continuing to stare, I reply as if by rote.

“There were three of us. The rest stayed back where Giang is. But I had the radio so there was no choice for me. I go where the lieutenant goes. And the Vietnamese scout with us had to go. But he didn’t like it. The lieutenant made him.”

Shaking off that time to gain better control and get more in tune with Jean, I put my arm around her shoulder and pull her close before I continue.

“We took fire, three rounds, where we stand. One went through the lieutenant’s leg and the other two just kicked up sand in front of us. When the lieutenant went down the scout ran back the way we had come.”

Pointing to the nearest part of the river bank ahead, I take a moment to see it clearly in my mind.

“When the lieutenant went down a lone VC broke cover and ran from that part of the shore. I dumped the radio and caught up enough to empty a magazine as he ran for the rice paddies. When he returned fire I took cover. Then suddenly it grew quiet so I moved on to the paddy track. He was face down in the mud. I rolled him over and saw that some of my shots had got him clear through. I still wonder at his ability to get that far. The wallet was sticking out of his breast pocket. I took the photo and money, and put the wallet back. Then I came back here and called in a dust off for the lieutenant.”

As we start again for the river bank the sound of Giang’s panicky voice turns our heads. Running towards us across the spit, with one arm held high and waving, his voice is clear and loud.

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"Wait for me, I must be with you. You can not go there alone. Stop and wait for me!"

Giang grudgingly joins Jean and I as we continue to the end of the spit and wade across the shallow water to the river's edge. Following a well traveled trail through the palms and other trees growing along the tributary, we emerge on the same track that was there all those years ago, though now it is wider. Looking across the many rice paddies, I see a small settlement of houses where there used to be the native huts of a small hamlet. Getting my bearings from them, the river, and the layout of the rice paddies, I lead our small group about 20 meters along the track to where I had looted the body of my enemy. Not feeling very well, I sit on a mound of stones and hang my head while Jean stands over me and rubs my shoulders. Giang, sensing that something important is happening, curiously looks on. After a moment, Jean is the first to speak.

"Is this where it happened, honey?"

"Yes, babe, this is where it all began ...or ended. Depending on how you look at it, I suppose."

Jean goes into her fanny pouch and removes a small book of poetry with the dong currency, photo, and a press flower in it. Handing it to me, she says, "It's the right thing to do, Ben."

Giang, now thoroughly intrigued, walks over to join Jean and me. And for a moment the three of us silently stare down at the little book of verse by Omar Khayyam.

Removing the photo from between the pages of verse, I study the woman's face one more time, wondering the same things I've wondered a thousand times before. Surprisingly, Giang squats down and looks closely at the photograph before standing and excitedly pointing toward the nearby settlement and demanding that I give him the photo. I look to Jean to see what her take on this is. She nods. So I hand over the picture.

Putting the picture in his tunic pocket while he moves quickly toward the crisscross of paddy dikes, Giang yells back over his shoulder, "Stay here, do not move. I will come back soon."

Jean and I watch him hurry across the dikes and disappear into the settlement of houses wondering if it was wise to let the photo go this near its journey's end. Before we can worry that much about it the frantically beeping horn of an old jeep, driven by an elderly woman, rivets our attention. Bumping towards us along the old track with Giang in the passenger seat, the jeep pulls up to us and stops. A smiling Giang hops down, goes around to the driver's side and offers his hand to the old woman. She says something I can't understand and smacks his hand away, sending him aside. Swinging both legs outside the jeep, she spryly hops down, walks over to Jean and me and just stares. First at Jean, and then at me. Finally she reaches into an apron-like pocket and pulls out the photo.

"This is me," she says in passable English. "I saw you take it."

Then no doubt she saw me take the money as well, I am thinking. I offer the book of verse with the dong and pressed flower. Accepting it, she opens the book, looks at the dong, and nods. Turning the pages a few



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times, she comes to the pressed flower and runs her finger along its stem. Looking only at Jean, she says, "Thank you."

Jean half bows, takes my hand, and points at my heart. The woman turns her eyes to mine, searches them for several moments, and looks to Giang. Motioning for him to come close, she says something in Vietnamese.

"She knows your name," Giang says, "because I told her. She wants you to know her name is Kim. And she wants to know why you are doing this."

My answer needs no thought.

"Because I killed her husband and took his things, tell her."

Giang tells her what I said, and listens to her reply, which seems quite long and detailed.

Turning to me, Giang says, "She says you did not kill him."

Giang points to the nearby river brush, then continues.

"She was hiding just there and could have shot you easily ...which she would have if you had killed him. You only chased him after he shot your officer. But you did not even wound him. Her husband was killed when he ran from the brush into the path of a helicopter and its machine gunner. He died instantly. Then you came from the same brush and took their money and the photo. The baby in the photo was their son. He was killed in Kampuchea, what you call Cambodia, in our war there. He was not yet even fully grown. This photo of her and her son during the time that they all lived means much. Too many wars, she says. Such waste."

Giang sadly shakes his head, and pats me on the back. And this almost knocks me over. Jean, looking none the steadier either, reaches out to Kim who graciously reciprocates as they hug.

I can barely stand. Thoughts are banging around in my head so fast and furious that it is useless to try to pursue any of them. Except one. I didn't do it. And I have returned what I stole. Maybe a bit more.

Wiping away tears as she and Jean part, Kim smiles for the first time, looks at me, and pats her heart. Openly sobbing, Jean turns to me and we hug for a long time as my tears also flow, my voice breaking with sobs as I say over and over, "I didn't do it."

Giang, not so removed, smiles and laughs with pleasure.

Having had the best with each other during our brief but truly divine encounter, we all move back down to the river where Giang, Jean and I begin our return with lifted hearts.

Reaching the near end of the sand spit, Jean calls for a pause and turns around to take a picture. Kim, standing on the river bank framed by the tall palms and low brush, waving to us, is a picture on Jean's digital camera bound for glory. Kim stands there until we reach the far bank and load back into the car. She watches our car windows full of waves, and hears Giang's long blast on the horn from far across the tributary of the muddy Thu Bon. Then, bits of peace both ways tendered, we are gone.



Driving back up the coast, Giang is even more jovial than before. Seeming to have forgiven us for breaking his rules he again points out things of interest and laughs a lot. But now, his eyes match his spirit.

Stopping to eat at a place that Giang knows, Jean and I let him order for us. And we are officially introduced to nuoc mam. Jean has a better first time experience with it than me. She gets past the smell after her first piece of fish dipped in it. For me it is more of a struggle, but I persist. With the encouragement of the others, after a few bites, I actually conquer it. The smell no longer drags my nose to unwelcome places. Now it simply falls in with the many other sights, sounds.....and smells of another culture different from my own. The many similar things that we share allows this success. Getting rid of my feelings about nuoc mam really tops off the joy of having returned Kim's property. To say that Jean and I are thankful would be an understatement. Giang, as well, seems fully appreciative of the good he helped do.

Arriving back at our hotel, we say goodbye to Giang while pressing a nice box of chocolates from the hotel gift shop into his hands. "For your wife," we must tell him several times before he accepts them. Then with a toot of the horn, a friendly wave, and a big smile, he drives away and disappears into the Da Nang traffic.

Making it back to our room, thoroughly but very pleasantly tired, we plan the agenda for the rest of our stay in Vietnam and, again, get dinner sent up.

This time, sitting on the little French balcony after eating, we watch the same young crowds up and down the avenue below. But with an attitude so different from the one before. In a way, we have come home.



In the autumn morning chill of a full dawn I can tell that the sun is beginning its push across the tidewater plains east of here. The sunny snow covered tops of the Smokies to the West, where it shines first, is my signal. Straddling the rich loose dirt as the tiller pulls me over the rime covered patch for garlic, I figure I can finish this prep work for planting in time to have some tea with Jean. The ease with which the rear tines dig in and loosen the dirt is close to a singular joy. We traded in the old front tine tiller, using the money left over from the Vietnam trip. Plenty of hay in the barn, the garden all turned under for winter, and livestock healthy and fit. What more could we ask for? I'll do the garlic in a week or so and that'll be it for the garden until spring. Finishing the last row, I shift the tiller out of gear, switch it off, and store it for winter in the open sided shed.

Walking up to the house, I can see Jean in the kitchen window holding up an empty cup and smiling. After I remove my boots on the back porch, I grab a couple of locust logs for quick heat and enter the house. Stopping on the way to throw one of the logs in the wood stove, I pick up the aroma of homemade apple butter mixing with the cozy smell of wood heat. Scooting along the hardwoods in my socks I silently enter the kitchen and hug Jean from behind.

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"Darling, your kitchen smells have lost none of their charm. Hope I made it in time for tea."

Turning around and kissing me before putting the tea on the table with the toast and apple butter, Jean looks as happy as I've ever seen her.

"Flattery will get you everything," she says. "Sit down and try that apple butter. I just opened the jar."

Taking my usual chair, I spoon out some apple butter on a piece of toast, and take a bite.

"Very good my dear, you outdid yourself. Does that get me whatever I want too?"

Jean sits down with our tea and demurely smiles before answering.

"Almost Ben. Mustn't be too easy."

I chuckle and have a sip of tea. A pleasant silence settles about while we simply look at each other. After a moment Jean reaches out and takes my hand.

"We got really lucky, didn't we, Ben?"

"No doubt about it, babe, we did. But it would have been impossible without you. I feel like a new person except for my love for you. That could never be new. Because it is, was, and ever shall be."

"I'm so happy for us," Jean says. "No more awful souvenirs. We are free."

Pausing to soak in the glow of our new life together, I think of all the time spent regretting something that never happened. And the waste of that war. But I will not let that drag us down any more. Standing from the table, I walk into the den where the wood stove is to look for something. Finding what I want, I go back into the kitchen with my hands behind my back. Walking over and standing by the table where Jean sits with a puzzled look, I say, "You know babe, we are not completely free. There is still a souvenir, I'm afraid."

Picking up the small framed picture of Kim from the table and holding it up, Jean says, "You mean this?"

I shake my head.

Placing the picture back on the table, Jean gives me that old look of utter frustration and says, "Well, hell! And I was feeling such success. What in the world is it now?"

As Jean's eyes grow wide and a slow smile brightens her face, I place beside Kim's picture a tall bottle of nuoc mam.